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THE IRON SPIRIT ; OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE PLAINS.

BY AN OLD SCOUT.
AND OTHER STORIES



Raising his huge sword above his head, the Iron Spirit urged his horse against the ranks of the troops. Before the troopers realized his intention he had broken his way through the ranks and was dashing off at a gallop.

JOHN A. BREZNICKY
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HAZLETON PA.



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THE IRON SPIRIT

OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE PLAINS

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.—Old Tornado.

"I'm Old Tornado, I am. That's been my handle even sence I fust crossed these plains like an old devastating, death-dealing blast of the atmosphere of destruction. I'm a reg'lar thoroughbred, double-breasted patent self-acting blizzard from the icy north, and when I breathe hard, no family kin do without some cemetery stock. I'm the only true and original Royal American hurricane, and you air a little southern zephyr, what has ter be instructed in the way yer little footsteps should be placed."

The appearance of the speaker contrasted strangely with his bombastic words. He was an old man of sixty, or thereabouts, with his originally diminutive stature rendered still more so by a stoop in his shoulders. He was dressed in a leather hunting-shirt and leggings worn so long that they shone with grease. A bowie knife and two revolvers were stuck in his belt, and an Evans repeating rifle lay on the ground beside him. He was seated beside a fire built at the entrance of a small canyon, and shedding a light through the darkness around; as he talked, he was busily engaged in broiling a buffalo steak, which his companions eyed with hungry glances.

This companion was a strange one. It was not, as might have been supposed, a human being, but a huge panther. He evidently recognized the old man as his master, however, and as he continued to talk, a fashion not uncommon with those who have lived much alone, the brute almost seemed as if he understood the words. As Old Tornado proceeded, the animal gave a low, threatening growl.

"What's that yer say, Zephyr?" the man said, quickly. "Air it red demons or white ones?"

The panther gave another low, fierce growl, and with an alacrity that seemed surprising, Old Tornado seized his rifle, and leaped to his feet. Hardly had he done so when a sharp swish broke the silence, and an arrow struck the ground, not two feet distant from where he stood.

"Yer were right, Zephyr," he said. "It air Injuns, and thar'll be a raging hurricane sweep-

ing through this canyon afore long, or else—Ha! what's that?"

He seized the arrow as he spoke, and drawing it from the ground, saw that a scrap of paper was attached to it. With a ludicrous expression of surprise upon his wrinkled face, he unfastened the paper, and then closely examined the arrow.

"It air all right so far, Zephyr," he said at length. "This air not a war arrow. Thar air danger of some sort around, though, and we will hev to put our heads together to try and discover what this hyar bit of handwriting has ter say about it."

Casting a scrutinizing glance through the darkness around him, and with the rifle resting in the hollow of his arm, he knelt down and tried to decipher the words of the arrow-sent missive. At last he was successful, and had learned the contents of the note. It read as follows:

"You are encroaching upon my domains. All who do so die. Be wise and heed in time the warning of The Iron Spirit."

"Zephyr," he said, at length, "we hev got our hands full now. I hev heerd of this critter afore. He air a terror, but ef he thinks he can scare the howling old tempest of the wilderness, he air most dernably slipped up on it. I am the untamed, old spread-eagle spirit of the whirlwind, and you air the little Zephyr what comes in on the home-stretch. Ef that derved old——"

He ceased suddenly and sprang to his feet, as the sharp crack of a rifle rang through the silence of the night. Mingling with it came a wild cry, and almos' immediately afterward another report.

"There air music in the air, Zephyr," old Tornado said, "and it won't do ef we ain't among the orchestra. Sharpen up yer claws, godson, and let the breezes blow."

He turned and walked rapidly out of the canyon, the panther following him as he spoke, until in a few minutes the open prairie stretched before him. The light of a fire in a small motte about a mile distant told that a party were encamped there for the night, and Old Tornado felt no doubt that it was from there the shots had proceeded.

CHAPTER II.—The Masked Captain.

A few hours before Old Tornado and his strange pet had entered the small canyon, another man had stood on almost the same spot the old plainsman had selected for his interrupted bivouac. His dress was rich and almost fantastic, resembling more that of an operatic brigand than one worn by any person in everyday life; the seams of his leggings were hung with bullion fringe; a gaudy Mexican strap fell over his shoulders; his waist-belt was covered with gold lace, and in it were thrust two gold-mounted Derringers, and a bowie knife with a mother-of-pearl hilt; a dark sombrero with a sweeping ostrich plume, fastened by a buckle of blazing brilliants, covered his head. Evidently he was waiting for some one, and he began to pace up and down impatiently, muttering to himself as he did so.

"He should have been here half an hour ago," he said. "It cannot be that he intends to play me false? He would not dare. It is just my usual luck that all the band should be absent at the very time when the chance I have waited for so long has come.

"No, he would not dare," he repeated, after a moment or two of silence. "Alike to the whites who know me as the Masked Captain, and the Indians who call me Hidden-Face, I am too much a thing of dread. It must be that he has been delayed. I will not believe that at last my vengeance will be snatched from me."

He laughed in a self-scornful way, and as he did so a shadow fell upon the ground beside him. The next moment the figure of an Indian advanced up the canyon toward the spot where he stood. In an instant the man's manner changed, and he took a step forward toward the newcomer and saluted him in a dignified way.

"Black Eagle is late," he said.

"The words of Hidden-Face are just," the Indian answered, in excellent English, "but Black Eagle was delayed and could not come. Now he is here and waits to hear what Hidden-Face has to say."

"You shall," the masked man answered, rapidly. "I have a prize for you and your braves. To-night a party of palefaces will encamp in the motte yonder. They shall be your captives and their scalps shall upon your lodge-poles hang."

The Indian listened stoically until the other ceased, and then he said:

"Hidden-Face's words sound fair, but they are like his face, and their meaning is concealed. Hidden-Face is a great warrior and his companions are also brave. Why do they not attack the train? Is it that they are afraid?"

An angry glitter came into the masked man's eyes, and he drew himself up proudly.

"Hidden-Face knows no fear. His features are concealed because they would strike terror into the breast of the most valiant of your braves. The words of Hidden-Face are fair, but Black Eagle knows that he keeps his counsel to himself. We both are chiefs and have smoked the pipe of peace together. As a friend, Hidden-Face tells his red brother of the booty waiting for him."

"Black Eagle accepts it from the hands of

Hidden-Face, for both have been upon the war-path together, and in the medicine lodge were made brothers. Black Eagle and his braves will not take all. Hidden-Face must have his share."

There was a ring of triumph in the other's voice, as he answered:

"Hidden-Face asks nothing except that two maidens who are among the party shall be given into his hands. The scalps of all the rest and all the plunder belong to Black Eagle and his braves."

"Black Eagle has heard, and he will remember the words of Hidden-Face. Now he must go to tell his braves."

"It is well," the other said. "When the night has fallen, I will meet you again."

With a grunt and a nod of approval, the Indian walked off majestically in the direction in which he had come, the other standing watching him until he was out of sight.

"At last, after all these years, I shall triumph," he was beginning, when a sound from the rocks above checked him.

It sounded like the echo of a mocking laugh, and involuntarily his hand sought one of the weapons in his belt.

"It was only my fancy," he said. "I must be getting nervous, lest, after all, my scheme should fail. But it shall not, and the sweet revenge for which I have waited all these years shall be mine at last!"

CHAPTER III.—The Iron Spirit.

All unconscious of the villainous compact between the masked man and the Indian chief, the party of emigrants reached the motte just as the sun was setting. The train was not a large one. It numbered about twenty wagons, and was accompanied by a small escort of about a dozen United States troops, under command of a lieutenant. There were not more than a dozen women in the party, and among them were two girls of sixteen and eighteen years of age, the daughters of Colonel Morland, who was in command of the garrison at Fort Mason, whither the train was bound.

Their names were Rose and Lily; and never had names been more aptly bestowed. Both were blondes of the purest type; and as they stood together, watching the preparations for the night's encampment, with the light of the setting sun making a halo around them, dull and cold indeed would have been the breast that would not thrill at the beauty of the picture. Evidently so thought Lieutenant Alston, but it was also evident that the one who pleased his fancy most was the elder sister. As he drew near to the spot where they stood, he was joined by the guide of the party, an old frontiersman, known as Prairie Pete, who for twenty years or more had guided trains across the plains.

"No," he said, in answer to a question of the lieutenant. "I don't opine as how thar are any danger for a few days, anyhow. As far as I kin gather, the redskins ain't on the warpath, and it will be to-morrow or the next day afore we reach the place where the Masked Captain takes toll from pilgrims."

"The Masked Captain?" the lieutenant asked.

"Yes," the guide answered. "He and his gang air the wust sarpints in the West."

The lieutenant cast an anxious glance toward the two girls, who were approaching the spot where he and the guide stood.

"We must be careful," he said. "I will have the guards doubled this very night."

"It can do no harm," the guide answered, "though I don't expect he'll visit us for a day or two. The only galoot who might give us a call is the Iron Spirit."

"The Iron Spirit?" Alston repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Because he always goes around in a suit of iron, and bullets and arrows have no more effect upon him than so much water. He are a terror on wheels, and don't you forget it."

"Does he ever attack travelers?"

"Well," the guide said, slowly, biting a huge mouthful from a plug of tobacco, "that's what I can't say. Some says he do, and again, others say he don't. Thar are some, though, that are ready to swear he are the masked captain in another disguise."

"It is strange," the lieutenant was beginning, and then, as the two girls came within hearing, he abruptly changed the subject.

The guide's story had trouble him, however, and when the sentinels were posted for the night, he doubled the usual number. All the men selected for the duty were tried and trustworthy, and knowing them to be so, the lieutenant at last went to sleep, without any anxiety. That his confidence was misplaced, however, soon became evident; they had not been posted more than half an hour, when, as if moved by a common impulse, they ceased their measured march, and sitting down with their rifles across their knees, in a few minutes were all sound asleep.

For nearly half an hour longer the silence was unbroken, and then the shrill cry of an owl rang out upon the night air. It fell upon the ears of more than a hundred dark-skinned forms crouching concealed in the long grass, not more than two or three hundred yards from the motte, and as it did so, they grasped their weapons more firmly in their hands. Still none of the sleeping party awoke, and the savages waited expectantly for the signal to be repeated, when an involuntary ejaculation of amazement left the lips of each of them.

The next moment a rifle shot rang sharply through the silence. It was followed by a cry of agony—then another shot. In an instant the startled emigrants had leaped to their feet, each grasping any weapon that chanced to be near. For a few moments all were too bewildered to understand what had happened, and then the cause of the alarm became apparent.

Stretched, rigid in death upon the ground, with the rifle that had dropped from his nerveless hands beside him, lay one of their party; and not twenty yards away sat a figure on horseback. The figure of a man clad in a complete suit of armor of burnished steel, upon which the light of the stars and the rising moon glistened with a weird and spectral effect. As Prairie Pete saw him, an involuntary exclamation left his lips.

"Great Jehoshaphat!" he cried. "It is the Iron Spirit!"

CHAPTER IV.—Upon the Trail.

The startled emigrants stood grasping their weapons, and in front of them sat the iron-clad figure, with the light of the rising moon falling with weird and spectral effect upon his burnished armor, motionless and silent. Beyond and around, crouching among the long prairie grass that completely hid them from view, were the Indians, only waiting their chief's command to spring upon the unsuspecting emigrants.

The latter still stood looking irresolutely at each other, doubtful whether to regard the iron-clad figure in the light of a friend or foe. Suddenly a voice broke the solmen silence.

"Upon them!" it cried. "Are Black Eagle and his braves only squaws, that they are afraid of a single man?"

The words were echoed by a command in angry tones in the Comanche language, and more than a hundred savages, with their faces hideous with war-paint, sprang into view, and dashed toward the spot where the emigrants stood. As they did so, for the first time, a sound issued from behind the bars of the strange horseman's helmet.

"The Comanches must be fools," he said, "or they are eager to join their fathers in the happy hunting grounds that they thus dare to provoke the anger of the Iron Spirit. All who thus approach me, whether their skins are red or white, die the death of the sword!"

While he was speaking he had drawn a huge two-handed sword from its sheath; then, with a command to his horse, he dashed directly toward the Indian chief. For a moment the sword circled in the air like a flash of light, and descended upon the head of Black Eagle. The action, however, instead of striking terror to the Indians, only seemed to further arouse their ferocity, and a hard contest ensued.

The emigrants, also awakening to a sense of their peril, fought bravely; but in spite of their efforts and those of their iron-clad ally, the savages gradually began to gain the advantage. Suddenly, however, the sound of rifle shots in rapid succession came from the rear, and for every shot an Indian fell. Doubting not that they were attacked by a strong party of troops or hunters, a sudden panic seized the savages, and, throwing down their weapons, they fled for their lives. For a short distance the Iron Spirit continued to follow them, his deadly sword bringing down a victim at every blow, until they began to scatter in every direction, when wheeling around his horse, he rode back to where the emigrant party stood.

The attack, the fight and the victory had all occurred so rapidly that most of them were still too bewildered to speak; the first to recover himself was Lieutenant Alston, and as the Iron Spirit once more halted his horse, he advanced toward him.

"We all owe you our lives——" he was beginning, when the mailed horseman checked him with a wave of his gauntleted hand.

"I wish no thanks," he said, in a stern voice that sounded sepulchral through the bars of the visor that concealed his face from view. "What I did was because it suited my purpose to do so, and not from pity for you. I do not know the meaning of the word. All human passions are

dead within my breast. I am the Iron Spirit, and like the armor that covers my form, so is my heart."

Puzzled as to what answer to make to this strange address, for a moment or two Alston was silent.

"As I have said," the strange horseman resumed, "what I have done was for a purpose of my own. You had a traitor in your camp who was to betray you into the hands of the Masked Captain——"

"Then point him out to me, and he shall receive the reward of his treachery without delay."

"Your vengeance would be too late. It was his death-shot that aroused you from your sleep just now."

"I am glad the wretch has received his deserts, and our gratitude——"

"Speak not to me of gratitude. I save or destroy as it suits my purpose. This time I have saved you, but the next time we meet, if you do not obey my commands, I will destroy."

"What are they?"

"Encroach not on the territory I have reserved for myself. Every human being who places his foot upon it dies."

"But," Alston asked in astonishment, "how are we to know where this mysterious reservation lies?"

"Your guide knows well. Obey my command, and you will be safe. Disobey it, and you perish. I have warned you. Now beware!"

He wheeled his horse suddenly around as he spoke, and before Alston fully realized his intention had dashed at a full gallop across the plains.

It will be remembered that as the sound of the cry and the rifle-shots fell upon the ears of the queer individual who called himself Old Tornado, he had started to his feet, and grasping his rifle, made his way as fast as possible in the direction from which the shots had come. When he reached the mouth of the canyon, he could see in the light of the rising moon the encampment in the motte, and with a command to the pet panther to follow close at his heels, he continued to hurry on toward it. Before he had completed half the distance, however, as he reached the crest of one of the prairie waves, he saw the Indians arise from their ambush, and as he did so an oath left his lips.

"Lie still thar, Zephyr," he said; "them red demons are too far off for a leetle balmly breath like you ter fan them. What they want air a regular old concentrated whirlwind, and they will get it, too, or the old American hurricane ain't what he used to be."

"It air no use for any of ther galoots ter try ter keep their feet when the old spirit of the whirlwind begins ter fool around," he said, as he began to rapidly reload his rifle. "I guess thar'll be more Injun ha'r in the market, too, ef any of the cusses come along this way on the home track."

The panic-stricken Indians, however, all seemed to be making their way in a different direction; and having finished reloading his rifle the old man again addressed his dumb companion.

"Zephyr, that feller on horseback air a regular old breath of destruction. He air that, and—by the holy babes of Jerusalem, he air coming this way. Ef ever he should happen ter collide with this old whirlwind, thar'll be a death-

wave sweep over the hull continent of America." He grasped his rifle more firmly as he spoke, and waited the approach of the horseman, who was coming at a gallop toward the spot where he stood. Suddenly, however, an exclamation left his lips, and he dropped at full length among the long grass. Hardly had he done so when the mail-clad rider went dashing past, his armor clanking loudly through the silence. After several moments Old Tornado regained his recumbent position, and then, arising to his feet, gave vent to his feelings in a long-drawn whistle.

"Thet air the galoot what tried ter bulldoze the great sweeping storm-wind what breathes dead men's names. Thet air the Iron Spirit, Zephyr, and we hev ter track him down, and teach him what it is ter-buck against the whirlwind."

CHAPTER V.—A Stand for Life.

Late in the afternoon preceding the attack on the emigrant train, and about the same hour as the interview between the Masked Captain and Black Eagle, a solitary horseman rode across the plains. He was a man of twenty-five or six, with a face that would have at once commanded attention anywhere. Though not particularly handsome, there was an expression upon the clear cut classical features and in the glance of the dark gray eyes that told he was a man of iron will and inflexible determination. His dress was the usual one of the plains; the only trace of affectation being a drooping ostrich feather in his broad sombrero, clasped with a gold buckle. He had been riding since early morning, and the animal was beginning to show signs of fatigue; as he noticed it the horseman checked his pace, and patted him on the neck.

"Keep up a brave heart, Fleetfoot, old fellow," he said. "An hour or two more, and we will reach a place where we can rest for the night."

The animal pointed his ears forward, and arched his neck in appreciation of the caress, and proceeding on nearly an hour longer a small motte loomed up against the sky ahead of them. By the time the sun was setting they had reached it, and dismounting, the horseman removed the saddle and bridle, and, turning the animal loose to feed upon the grass, he began to build a fire and prepare his own supper of dried meat, which he carried with him. When he had finished eating it, he drew a pipe and tobacco from his pocket, and as the spiral wreaths of smoke curled above him he sank into a deep reverie. Not until his pipe was smoked out did he arouse himself from his meditation, and, glancing around, saw that the night was rapidly falling.

"Why do I thus worry myself with doubts that my quest will fail?" he said, impatiently, aloud. "Nothing but death shall cause me to fail."

Carefully extinguishing the fire, he placed the saddle for a pillow, and then, with his rifle beside him, he covered himself with his blanket and soon was fast asleep. He was awakened by something cold pressed against his cheek; in an instant he had seized his rifle, and started to a sitting position. Not the slightest sound left his lips, however, and he saw he had been awakened by his horse rubbing his nose against his face. He knew at once it was a signal of

danger; and listening intently for a few seconds, he could hear the sound of hoofs approaching. In another moment he had leaped to his feet.

"Good Fleetfoot," he said, patting his neck. "You are worth a hundred human friends. You never betray a trust reposed in you. Come, now, we must hide ourselves."

Seizing the bridle and saddle, he walked rapidly to a spot where the underbrush grew thick and dense, and then turning to the horse he said:

"Now, lie down!"

The sagacious animal instantly obeyed the order, and his master crouching beside him, the bushes completely hid them both from view.

The next moment five horsemen rode up to the motte. As they drew rein the light of the moon above the trees fell full upon them; and, peering through the bushes, the concealed man could see one of them hold something wrapped in a heavy cloak and resembling a human form resting on the saddle before him. All dismounting, they laid the figure on the ground, and, picketing their horses, began to light a fire.

"Hadn't we better try if we can't bring the gal to?" one of them asked. "Ef she was to be dead when the captain comes, he'd make it hot for us."

"She ain't goin' ter die," the man addressed answered, with a hoarse laugh. "Women don't kick as easy as that comes to. Let her alone till we've had something to eat, and I gamble she'll be around by that time."

"Waal," the first speaker answered, dubiously, "since you've got command, I suppose it's all right, but I don't want to get Hidden-Face, as the Indians call the captain, down on me."

As the name of Hidden-Face fell upon the listener's ears, he gave a sudden start.

"So," he muttered, "these ruffians belong to that fiend's gang. But——"

He did not finish the words, but raising the rifle to his shoulder, took deliberate aim at the nearest of the outlaws. Still he did not fire, and, after a moment's hesitation, he half lowered the weapon. A revengeful look came upon his face, and again the weapon was leveled; the next moment one of the ruffians fell forward on his face.

His companions sprang to their feet, with expressions of alarm, but at the same moment the other also emerged from his place of concealment, his finger again pressing the trigger of his weapon as he did so. Another of the outlaws went down, never to rise again, and before the other three could collect their scattered senses sufficiently to use their weapons, they also joined their companions. Crossing to where the burden the ruffians had carried lay, he removed the cloak, and saw revealed the form of a beautiful girl of about sixteen.

A slight pulsation showed him she still lived, and, hurrying to the little spring beside his camping-place he laved her forehead to try and restore her to consciousness. In a few moments he had the satisfaction of seeing her begin to revive, and she opened her eyes, but only to close them again as a shudder ran through her frame.

"There is no time to lose," he said at length. "A moment's delay may be fatal, and it is better to take the chances than to attempt to revive her again. By sunrise, if we ride fast, we should

have reached the canyon, and there she will be safe until she has quite recovered from the shock."

As he came to this conclusion, he raised her in his arms, and, placing her before him in as comfortable a position as possible upon the saddle, he struck out at a gallop across the plains. For nearly two hours he rode, the horse carrying his double burden bravely; once the girl opened her eyes, but only to relapse into insensibility; the sun was beginning to show itself in the eastern sky, and still no sign of any human presence was to be seen.

"Another hour, Fleetfoot, old boy," his rider said, "and you shall have your well-earned rest."

Hardly had he spoken the words, however, when turning, he saw a body of horsemen, about twenty-five in number, following him. A swell in the plains had up to this time concealed them from view, and now they were not much more than a mile distant. A single glance also, to the horseman's experienced eye, was sufficient to show that they were Indians, and that they were urging their horses in pursuit.

Had the horseman been alone, he might have turned, and, awaiting their approach, picked them off one by one as they came within range of his deadly Evans rifle; but encumbered as he was with the girl he had no chance but flight. He had little fear of not being able to distance them, and urging on his horse, in less than a quarter of an hour he had gained on them nearly half a mile.

Suddenly, however, directly ahead of him another party of horsemen came into view upon the horizon, and the rapidity with which they assumed larger proportions showed they were coming at full speed toward him. A few moments more, and he was able to distinguish that they were not Indians, but white men, and an expression of grim determination came upon his face. He had no doubt that they were the outlaws, coming to keep their appointment with their comrades in the motte, and if so, both his own fate and that of the girl was sealed. A glance behind him showed the pursuing Indians had also observed the approaching party, and were spreading out their lines so as to more effectually prevent his escape.

CHAPTER VI.—The Threatened Doom.

For several minutes after the abrupt departure of the Iron Spirit the emigrants stood still, bewildered. Lieutenant Alston was the first to recover himself, and he gave the order to have the wounded attended to. Several were wounded, but none dangerously; none were dead except the accomplice of the outlaws; who had been killed by the Iron Spirit's bullet; but, although the sentinels were unharmed, they all lay in a state of utter insensibility.

That the dead traitor had drugged them there could be no doubt, and had it not been for the timely interference of the Iron Spirit, nothing could have saved them all from falling victims of the savages. Hardly had this discovery been made, however, than it was supplemented by an even more startling one. The wagon which had been assigned to Rose and Lily Morland as their

sleeping-place was empty—both girls were gone! There could be no doubt that they had been abducted, but how the dark deed had been done without detection was a mystery.

"They must be found," Lieutenant Alston cried excitedly. "We must start at once on the track of the miscreants who have carried them off."

To this proposition all the emigrants assented eagerly. The only one who did not do so was Prairie Pete, the guide.

"I don't go for ter blame yer, lieutenant," he said, "but I know more about these hyar plains than you do, an' it wouldn't be right. Let us push on to the nearest fort, an' then get the troops ter help us."

The lieutenant turned upon him angrily.

"I command this train," he said, "and shall do as I think fit. I shall divide the men into two parties, and leave half to guard the train, while the rest set out to search for the young ladies. I shall not ask anyone who is afraid to join the searching party. I only want volunteers."

Accordingly, preparations were at once made for the search; but although there was no lack of volunteers, even Prairie Pete, notwithstanding his previous objection, insisted on going, the dawn was breaking before they were ready to start. Following Prairie Pete's guidance, instead of striking in the direction of the canyon in which Old Tornado had made his interrupted bivouac on the previous night, they rode in an opposite direction across the open prairie toward a spot reputed to be one of the retreats of the Masked Captain.

For nearly an hour they rode on until the sun began to arise, when, a mile or two ahead of them, they saw a horseman coming at full speed toward them. A few minutes more, and they could also see he was closely pursued by more than a score of Indians, who were lengthening out their lines as if to surround him. Suddenly the fugitive reined in his horse and sat erect in his saddle, as if awaiting the Indians' approach.

Expressions of surprise left the emigrants' lips at the singular course of action, but a few words from Prairie Pete explained it.

"He takes us for prairie pirates, don't yer see, and he means ter fight the Injuns and then us."

Even as the words were spoken they saw a thin tongue of flame flash out, and one of the Indians throw up his arms and fall from his horse.

"Great king, but he air true grit!" Prairie Pete said, admiringly; "but we'll hev ter make some signal, or he'll be goin' for us next."

As he spoke he drew his revolver and discharged it rapidly in the air while Lieutenant Alston placed his handkerchief on the point of his sword and waved it above his head. In a few moments it became evident the man had discovered his mistake in supposing them to be outlaws, and once more he urged his horse toward them. As he drew near enough for the features of the solitary horseman to be recognized, an exclamation of satisfaction left Prairie Pete's lips.

"That's him!" he cried. "I know there warn't another man on the plains wud sit still in his saddle an' fight a hull score of Indians, and then tackle a party of pirates, except that identical Death-Trail Dick."

A few seconds more and he was grasping Death-Trail Dick by the hand.

"It does me good ter see yer agin, old pard," he said; "but what hev yer got in ther bundle?"

In a few minutes the story of the rescue of the unconscious girl from the ruffians in the motte was told. All crowded around to see her face, and no sooner had Lieutenant Alston's eyes fallen upon it, than he cried:

"Can it be possible? Miss Morland!"

It was indeed Lily Morland, but all efforts to restore her to consciousness were in vain, and at last it was decided to return to the wagons, and place her in the care of the women. By this time the story of the two girls' abduction had been told to Death-Trail Dick, and for several moments he was silent.

"You are off the trail of the other girl," he said, at length; "she has been taken in an altogether different direction. It was the outlaw captain's intention—for it was he who had them abducted, and the attack of the Indians was only ruse—to take them to separate places of captivity, and he went to see that the other was safe before he made sure of this one."

"I believe you are right," Lieutenant Alston said. "Have you any idea of where the retreats of the outlaws are?"

"I have a strong inkling of the whereabouts of the one to which the other girl has been taken, and if you will wait till night I will try to lead you there."

A little after sunset the party, numbering about twelve, and under the guidance of Death-Trail Dick, left the wagons and rode toward the canyon where Old Tornado had camped the previous night. Entering it, they rode on for a distance of probably a mile, when it branched off into two smaller canyons. Taking the one to the left, they went on for about a mile further, the ground growing so uneven as they proceeded as to make it impossible for their horses to go faster than a walk.

Ever since they had left the camp Death-Trail Dick had ridden several yards in advance of the rest of the party; suddenly they saw his horse stumble, and the next moment both animal and rider disappeared from view. All involuntarily reined in their horses, and not a moment too soon, a few steps more would have precipitated them over the edge of a yawning chasm stretching directly across their path.

A solemn silence fell upon all the party—a silence that was suddenly broken by a wild, ringing laugh. At the same time a lurid light shone through the darkness above them; and all glancing up, they saw the Iron Spirit, clad as before in complete armor, and holding a flaming torch in his gauntleted hand.

"I warned you, but you have defied me, and encroached upon my domain," he said. "Now, go down to the doom you have brought upon yourselves."

As he spoke he stamped upon the rocky ledge with his iron shod foot, and waved the torch above his head. As he did so the ground on which they stood began to tremble beneath the listener's feet. Instinctively each attempted to spring further back from the edge of the abyss; but

It was too late, and the next moment they were hurled with a gigantic mass of earth and stones down to the darkness and doom.

CHAPTER VII.—Buried Alive.

At last they struck the solid ground below. The force of the fall was so great that they were all deprived of consciousness. Lieutenant Alston was the first to recover his senses. Recollection gradually returning to him, he struggled to his feet and gazed around. Impenetrable darkness surrounded him.

Fortunately, however, he had a box of matches in his pocket, and, striking one, it shed a feeble glow through the darkness. By its light he was able to see most of his companions lying around, either insensible or dead. He also saw a few fragments of wood that had fallen with the earth, and, collecting them together, he sought to ignite them. After some difficulty this was accomplished, and then he turned to his companions to see if they were really dead or only insensible. To his great satisfaction he saw that the latter was the case, and in a few moments more they began to revive.

Instead of being in the open air they were in a huge cavern with a vaulted roof, among the shadows of which the smoke curled in weird and fantastic shapes. That there was no opening above them was evident, as the smoke showed no inclination to escape as it certainly would have done had there been any aperture by which it could have done so. They looked at each other in silent bewilderment for several seconds, when Alston spoke.

"It does not matter how we came here," he said. "Certain it is we are here, and what we must do now is to find some way of getting out. We have no time to lose, either, for our fire will soon be burned out, and we will be in utter darkness again."

The truth of this was apparent, and each, seizing a brand from the fire, started to explore the cavern. By the time they had made the round of the walls their brands had nearly burned out, and the fire was already only a heap of smoldering embers. They looked at one another in silence, and then, as if by common consent, moved toward the expiring fire. They all knew their terrible doom although none of them put it into words. They were buried alive—doomed to a lingering death of starvation and despair.

The thoughts of all were gloomy enough, but those of Lieutenant Alston particularly so. He could not divest himself of the idea that the whole misfortune that had fallen on the emigrant train placed under his command was owing to his negligence; and now all hope of ever repairing the evil was taken away from him. He held himself responsible for the fate of the two girls who had been placed in his charge, and as he thought of the captivity of one and the precarious state of the other, a groan of anguish left his lips. But though his remorse was real, there was a vein of selfishness in it; he tried to persuade himself that the fate of both girls interested him equally, but his heart denied the assertion, and told him one was far dearer than the other. At first he had been attracted by the

stately, swan-like grace of Rose; but when he came to know them more, he felt it to be only a passing fancy, and his whole heart and soul was given to the more retiring but equally beautiful Lily.

And now she lay at death's door through his negligence, and he should never see her again; the thought was harrowing, and he could almost have wailed aloud in his despair. He did not do so, however, and in darkness and silence the hours dragged away. They seemed like so many centuries to the helpless captives, and an apathetic despair had settled upon them all, when suddenly a sound, as of shuffling footsteps approaching, fell upon their ears. In an instant all had thrown off their torpor, and, grasping their weapons, listened intently. The shuffling footsteps came nearer; then two fierce eyes, like twin balls of fire, flashed through the darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.—A Foiled Escape.

It will be remembered that the searching party had been led by Death-Trail Dick, also that a few moments previous to the appearance of the Iron Spirit Death-Trail Dick's horse had stumbled, throwing himself and rider over the edge of the yawning chasm. Down the animal and his rider fell for a distance of nearly fifty feet, when Death-Trail Dick succeeded in withdrawing his feet from the stirrups.

It was a fearful fall—a frightful experience; though but a second or two had elapsed since the horse had lost his footing, to the rider it seemed an endless age—in which all the incidents of his life from his earliest childhood passed in review through his memory. Suddenly something cut him sharply across the face, causing a pain like that of the lash of a heavy whip.

Instantly realizing that it was his only possible chance for his life, the young man released his hold of the animal's sides and neck and clutched wildly in the air. He knew that the blow he had received on the face was from the branch of some projecting tree, and he was determined to attempt to grasp it, and thus save himself from an otherwise inevitable doom. It was a desperate chance, but it was successful; the limb was but a small one, and it bent almost double beneath his weight; still it did not break, and though his hands were cut almost to the bone by the rough bark, he held on with the strength of despair. For several seconds he hung suspended there, panting and breathless; as he did so he could hear a dull thud far below him, and he knew it was his horse crushed to a shapeless mass upon the rocks in the valley.

He shuddered as he thought how narrowly he had escaped the same horrible fate; and then, nerving himself for the attempt, he began to try to reach the main limbs of the tree. The task was a difficult one, but at last he accomplished it, and, reaching the main limbs, he crawled along the trunk until his hands once more touched solid ground. Groping his way through the darkness, he found that the tree grew out of a sort of ledge several feet in width; and, crawling upon it, he settled himself as comfortably as he could to wait until the morning should break. He had not intended to go to sleep, but at last, wearied

out by the exertions he had undergone, he did so, and did not awake until the sun had risen.

As yet, however, its rays had not reached the spot where he lay, and, starting to his feet, he looked around him. The ledge on which he stood was on one side of a canyon, about a hundred yards in width; above him the rocks towered to a height of fifty feet or more, and, peering over the edge, he could see that the valley where his horse lay crushed to a shapeless mass was nearly three times that distance below. The ledge was several feet in width, but not more than twenty in length, and a rather blank look came upon his face as he considered his position.

"I have saved myself from being dashed to atoms down below there, it is true," he said; "but it seems I have only changed the death for one of starvation. No one, without either rope or wings, could ever get out of here."

As he spoke he had advanced to the end of the ledge, and he now saw his surmise had been correct. The ledge, instead of ending abruptly, had narrowed to a width of little over a foot, for a distance of several yards, and then widening out again seemed to proceed along another cleft in the mountain, leading from the main canyon.

For nearly a hundred yards he went along it, when his further progress was stopped by a precipitous wall of rock completely blocking the path. What should he do now? To go on was impossible, while to return would only bring him to the spot he had started from. Seating himself, he drew his pipe from his pocket, and, lighting it, began to consider his situation. As he did so a sound as of distant voices fell upon his ear.

That they proceeded from behind the rocks was certain, and after listening in different places, he at last struck a small crevice between two rocks, filled with wind-sown plants, where he could hear the sounds so distinctly as to be almost able to distinguish the words. Tearing up the plants, with his knife he began to dig away the earth until an opening was made between the rocks, and, peering through, he was able to distinctly see the speakers.

One was a young girl of about eighteen. She was rarely beautiful, and as Death-Trail Dick saw her an involuntary exclamation of surprise almost left his lips. Her companion was dressed in a costume resembling that of a theatrical brigand, and his face was concealed by a mask. The place in which they stood was a small cavern, and the interview was evidently at an end, for as Death-Trail Dick peered through the opening the man turned and walked toward the entrance.

"Remember what I have told you," he said, pausing for a moment before passing out. "My wife you shall be, either willingly or by force, by the time another sun rises. I have said it, and the Masked Captain always keeps his word."

He passed out of the cavern as he spoke, while the girl sank upon the floor, her face buried in her hands, in an attitude of utter despair. A fierce oath came hissing from between Death-Trail Dick's teeth as he heard the words.

"The Masked Captain!" he repeated. "My deadly foe! But I will foil you this time or die in trying."

The resolute look upon his face had deepened into an almost ferocious expression as he spoke,

and after examining the chambers of his revolvers, he set to work to enlarge the opening between the rocks, until, in less than an hour, he had made it large enough to admit his body. At the entrance to the cavern he could see a man with a rifle on his arms pacing up and down, but the gloom within made it impossible for him to see what was passing within, and, crawling through the opening he had made, Death-Trail Dick advanced toward the girl and laid his hand on her arm.

"Hush!" Death-Trail Dick said, hurriedly. "I am a friend. Not a word or we are lost."

The girl seemed to comprehend the situation in an instant, and listened in silence while he explained his appearance, and told her to wait patiently until night, when they would make an attempt to escape.

"But why not at once?" the girl asked, when he had finished. "The captain is away, and there are only four men left on guard."

"Then at once let it be," Death-Trail Dick said. "Can you use a revolver?"

"Yes."

"Then take one of mine. Unfortunately, I have lost my rifle, but I think even now we will be more than a match for these four scoundrels."

The girl took the offered weapon, and, keeping concealed as much as possible in the shadow of the wall, they crept cautiously toward the entrance of the cavern. As they reached it Death-Trail Dick raised his revolver and fired. With but a single cry of mortal agony the sentinel fell in his tracks, and with a command to his companion to follow, the young man dashed out of the cave.

Before the three remaining outlaws could recover from their first feeling of surprise, his weapon had spoken twice in rapid succession, each time bringing down its man. Almost simultaneously the girl fired, and the third man fell. With a few hurried words to his companion, Death-Trail seized the Evans rifle from the dead sentinel's grasp, and together they hurried along the pathway leading from the cavern. For nearly an hour they went on thus, until at last they came into a narrow canyon down the rocky side of which a little stream was trickling. Suddenly more than a dozen men sprang from the places where they had been concealed by the adjacent rocks and advanced toward the pair.

All had weapons in their hands, and foremost among them was the Masked Captain.

"Attempt any resistance, either of you," he said, fiercely, "and you both die on the spot."

CHAPTER IX.—The Golden Valley.

As the helpless prisoners in the cavern that seemed destined to become their living tomb saw the fiery eyes glaring at them through the darkness, all involuntarily grasped their weapons.

"Do not fire," Prairie Pete said, in an excited whisper. "If you do our last hope is gone."

Then, turning to Alston, he asked:

"Have you any matches left?"

"Yes, several. I saved them in case of emergency."

"And anything that will make a flame for a few moments?"

This was also done, and the whole party stood unarmed; when the last of the weapons were placed on the pile at 100 feet he turned to

huge sword, and stood with one gauntleted hand resting on the hilt.

"Descend into the valley," he said.

There was no choice but to obey, and one by one the party descended the path to where the others stood. When the last of them had left the path, the Iron Spirit also descended and stood beside them.

"You have saved your lives by your prompt obedience," he said. "I shall only detain you for a day or two, and then you shall be guided to the spot where you have left your companions."

Then, turning to the miners, he added:

"Take the prisoners to the hidden cave. See that they have food and are well treated; but beware that none of them escape. If they do, you know the penalty—a life for every one."

He turned as he finished speaking, and strode up the uneven path to the ledge above, where, after a moment, he entered the cavern and disappeared from view. Meanwhile the miners had formed their prisoners in single file, and made silent gestures for them to move along. It was a noticeable fact that all their actions were performed in solemn silence; not a word was spoken during the time they marched the prisoners for a distance of a hundred yards or more, and then paused before a seemingly solid wall of rocks. A slight pressure of one of the miner's hands, however, on a particular stone, caused it to swing on a pivot, revealing an opening that was evidently the entrance to a cavern.

Naturally the prisoners hesitated for a moment or two, but the threatening way in which their silent captors raised their weapons proved persuasive, and one by one they passed the opening. When the last had done so, the stone was swung back into its place, and they found themselves in total darkness. By the light of a match, overlooked in Alston's previous search of his pockets, they were able to catch a momentary glimpse of the interior of their prison. It was a small cave not more than twenty feet long, with walls, floor and roof as smooth as if polished out of the rock by the patient labor of human hands.

In the center of an hear or brazier the stone was swung open, and one of the miners, standing outside, handed in a plain but substantial supper of dried meat and bread, as well as a pan of water and a small vessel of tallow, by which they could see to eat the food. The sight of the food and water had a clearing influence on the spirits of the prisoners; they showed that their hunger and thirst were not to be feared, and that they were not to be killed at once. They were, however, still in a state of confusion, and with a feeling of uncertainty in their minds. When the miner had finished his duty, he closed the stone, and the prisoners were left in the dark, feeling that the atmosphere was thick and heavy, making it difficult to breathe, and with a sudden terror upon them, all started to their feet. The air, which had become foul and stifling.

With a last despairing effort they rushed toward the swinging stone, and with their breath coming in short, quick gasps, strove to force it open. The effort was in vain, however, and one by one, overpowered by the foul, mephitic vapor, they sank upon the floor in the agonies of a slow, lingering death.

CHAPTER XI.—Left to Perish.

As the Masked Captain and his ruffianly followers so suddenly sprang from the shelter of the adjacent rocks and surrounded Death-Trail Dick and his fair companion, for a moment the young man was wholly taken by surprise. For a moment only, though; the next, his rifle sprang to his shoulder, and the Masked Captain, reeling for a moment, fell heavily to the ground. Almost before the first report had ceased another followed, and one more of the ruffians fell never to rise again. Again the young man pressed the trigger, but almost at the same moment a blow from behind struck him on the head, felling him senseless to the ground. A cry of triumph broke from the outlaws as they saw him fall, and half a dozen rushed forward to seize the girl.

Bravely she defended herself for several moments, her revolver speaking more than once, but her resistance was in vain, and she was soon overpowered. As she stood panting and breathless in her captors' rough grasp, the Masked Captain staggered to his feet. By the time his first feeling of bewilderment seemed to have passed, an evil, mocking light came into his eyes as they fell upon the girl.

"See that he does not escape," he said, and then advancing toward Rose he made a ceremonious bow.

"So you thought you would elope and leave your expectant bridegroom in the lurch, did you, young lady?" he said. "You should have taken my advice and not attempted it. I told you any such attempt would fail, and you see I told the truth. I never speak idly, and when I told you this morning that you should be my wife before another sun rises, I meant it, and you shall. I have sent four men I can trust for a clergyman, and in two hours at the latest they will be here."

He turned on his heel as he spoke, and walked toward the spot where Death-Trail Dick lay.

"Tie his hands and gag him," he said. "Then let us leave here and seek the higher ground, where we will be safe in case of surprise."

His orders were at once obeyed, and while two of the ruffians carried Rose, Death-Trail Dick was led along the path up the side of the canyon to a sort of level plateau hidden from view of the valley below, and where the outlaws' horses were picketed. Here the young man's feet were also securely tied, and the outlaws lounged around, waiting the return of their companions who had been dispatched for the clergyman.

Suddenly the sound of horses' hoofs coming up the canyon was heard, and one of the sentinels rushed at full speed to the spot where he stood.

"What is the matter?" the outlaw leader asked. "Is it our man returning?"

"No, captain," the man answered. "It is a company of cavalry."

"Then we must make haste out of this at once. Unpicket the horses, and four of you bring some pocket-pins and rope here."

The order was instantly obeyed, and then, following the Masked Captain's further directions, Death-Trail Dick was carried to a sort of hollow almost completely surrounded by a natural wall of rocks.

"Now, drive the pins in here," the captain commanded.

Four pins were accordingly driven firmly into the ground, and to these the young man's wrists and ankles were tied so that to even move was impossible.

When this was done the outlaw leader bent for a moment over the prostrate man.

"Now you can learn how we serve the enemies of our band," he hissed, and then turning, he hurried away, followed by his men, to where the horses were waiting. Another moment and he had seized Rose around the waist, and, lifting her, dashed out of the cave, the band dashed out of sight among the rocks. The feelings of Death-Trail broke at being thus compelled to lie powerless, unable to act for assistance, that he better himself than he could.

Gradually the sun went down, and the coolness of the evening brought him a little temporary relief; the twilight deepened into darkness, and the stars came out one by one. Suddenly a wild, plaintive howl rang through the silent night. It was the howl of a wolf. For a moment every man all was still; then the cry was echoed by a dozen similar ones in the distance. Nearer and nearer they came, until on the rocky wall ahead of him he could see the form of one of the savage mammals clearly defined against the sky. The brute stood sniffing the air for a moment or two as if afraid to venture further; then, with another fierce howl from his hungry jaws, he sprang upon the helpless man.

CHAPTER XII.—A New Surprise.

When overwhelmed by the foul air in the cavern, where they had been placed by command of the Iron Spirit, none of the party but believed their last hour had come. In this, however, they were destined to be most agreeably mistaken. One by one they gradually recovered consciousness, and gazed around them.

For some time no one spoke, hardly believing their eyes. The sun was shining from a cloudless sky above them, and a pleasant breeze was fanned upon their faces. They were on the top of a small hill, from which they could see the rolling prairie and the distant mountains ahead of them on the horizon.

Their weapons also had been restored to them, and attached to an arrow stuck in the ground was a slip of paper with the following words upon it, in bold characters:

"I have saved your lives this time at the bidding of one who has the right to claim the prisoners. But it is on the condition that all you have seen be kept in silence. Remember this, and beware for your souls, or the wrath of the Iron Spirit!"

As Lieutenant Alston looked upon this slip of paper, a shiver of terror went down his back. "This is certainly very singular," he said, "but we will go back to camp."

In the middle of the afternoon, before they reached the edge of the prairie about four miles distant from the mott, and then, for all the while, the guide's wonderful knowledge of the land to have recognized it as the place of

tance as when first seen. In a little less than an hour more they reached the mott.

As they did so expressions of the utmost surprise left the lips of them all. The place was deserted; the emigrants, cattle and wagons all were gone. In an instant the same startling question came into the mind of each.

"Had they been attacked? Had they fallen victims to the redskins or the equally to be dreaded prairie pirates?"

"Et don't altogether appear that way to me, either," Prairie Pete said, after a hurried survey of the camping ground. "Thar ain't no signs of any fighting been done here, and— Ah! here's the proofs of what I am telling yer."

The object that had caused his last remark was a large "blaze" on one of the trees; all drawing nearer they saw some words were traced upon it.

"The Indians are on the warpath," they ran, "and we have gone on under the escort of a company of troops. Follow our trail along the third canyon to the south."

They at once set out upon their companions' trail. As they went on, the trail became more distinct and easier to follow, causing Prairie Pete to give his opinion that they would overtake the train before night. For several hours they went on until suddenly turning a bend in the canyon, a faint light could be seen in the distance ahead of them.

"I guess we've struck them at last, boys," Prairie Pete said; "but we must be keeful till we make sure they ain't some of the Masked Captain's gang or redskins."

Almost at the same moment the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard, and a horseman emerged from the camp and dashed at full gallop toward them. It was the Iron Spirit. In his arms he held the form of a woman, robed in white, and with long tresses of golden hair streaming in the air. At the sight a terrible dread came into Alston's breast.

"My!" he cried aloud. "If it should be Lily Morland!"

Hardly had the words been uttered, than a cry of mortal agony from one of their number caused all the party to withdraw their eyes from the approaching horseman just in time to see their comrade fall dead upon the ground. The cause of his death was evident as a single arrow heart had been pierced by an arrow. The next moment a fierce, bloodcurdling cry rang out from more than a hundred throats, and a horde of Indians, following in their war robes, came from their places of concealment, surrounding the little party on every side.

CHAPTER XIII.—A Critical Moment.

For a moment the survivors of the preceding party stood motionless, looking at the unexpected appearance of their dark-skinned foes. An other instant the warriors were upon them, and the little party was surrounded.

"Stand, comrades," he cried, in a low, steady tone. "If we are to die, let us at least die like men."

A momentary pause ensued. A feeling of

in his horse, sat motionless as a figure carved out of stone.

"It is he!" Colonel Morland cried, throwing off his assumed calmness. "Upon him. On your lives do not let him escape!"

A mocking laugh from the mail-clad horseman was his only answer; as, placing his hand upon the hilt of his huge two-handed sword, he drew it from its sheath.

As Death-Trail Dick saw the savage animal prepare to leap from the rocky wall he involuntarily closed his eyes. Suddenly a sharp report rang out and with an expiring snarl the brute kicked the pocket.

Shortly after Dick's bonds were released and he stood in the presence of Old Tornado, who was on the trail of the Iron Spirit.

Death-Trail Dick explained he was in search of the Masked Captain and a girl he had run off with. So soon they parted company on their respective searches.

Suddenly a wild cry in a woman's voice reached his ears, and he saw a female struggling in the grasp of two men. In an instant he drew a revolver and fired. One of the men released his hold. He fired again and the other ruffian fell. Then he went to the assistance of the maiden, whom he recognized as the one he had rescued the previous day, and with her in his arms was about to return to the canyon, when turning, he was confronted by more than a dozen Indians. He prepared to defend himself when a hatchet was thrown; it caught him a glancing blow on the head and he was rendered insensible. When he came to he was bound hand and foot and guarded by two Indians. The rest were nowhere in sight. But after a while some of the Indians returned and they soon had Dick tied to a dead tree and were piling fagots about him, after which they set them on fire, and soon he was rendered unconscious.

CHAPTER XIV.—Death.

For a moment longer the Iron Spirit and the troops continued to regard each other in silence. It was broken by Colonel Morland.

"Charge!" he cried, turning to his men. "A thousand dollars if he is taken prisoner."

The men were about to obey the order, but in spite of themselves the voice of the Iron Spirit restrained them.

"I care not for your threats," he said, "were your threats twice as strong. I have come here as a friend. Are you disposed to accept me as such?"

"Yes," Colonel Morland answered, "on the condition that you will restore my daughter to me."

"I will do so, but not just yet. In good time I will not only restore her, but her sister also."

"And do you think you can elude me by such promises?" the colonel cried, angrily. "Give me some reason for your wish to restore her and some security for her welfare until you are fit to do so."

"I will do nothing. My reasons for wishing to restore her would be frustrated were I to explain them. The security for her welfare is my word that I will keep her from harm until the day

when I restore both her and her sister to you." With an angry expression the colonel turned to his men again, but the command he would have given them was stayed by a gesture of the Iron Spirit.

"I have offered you my friendship," he said, in a sterner voice than he had yet used. "Do you accept or refuse?"

"Until you explain the conditions you exact, I refuse."

Hardly were the words uttered, when, raising his huge sword above his head, the Iron Spirit urged on his horse against the ranks of the troops. Before the troopers realized his intention he had broken his way through the ranks, and was dashing off at the gallop. Almost beside himself at having been so taken by surprise, the colonel gave the order to follow him; but before it could be accomplished and the whole troop were fairly in pursuit, the Iron Spirit had gained several hundred yards more on his original start.

Suddenly they saw the fugitive rein in his horse and dismount; the next moment steed and rider disappeared from view. A few moments more and the pursuers had also reached the spot, and, all dismounting, looked around for the means by which the fugitive had so suddenly vanished. For nearly an hour their search was in vain, until suddenly an exclamation from Prairie Pete called all to the spot where he stood.

Crowding around him, they saw what seemed to be a passageway among the rocks, seemingly devised by Nature to baffle human ingenuity. Selecting one-half of the number to accompany him, the colonel ordered the others to stay outside and keep guard until his return. Each carried a torch, formed of the resinous pine knots of which there were plenty about, in one hand, and with a revolver grasped firmly in the other, they followed the colonel and Alston into the cavern.

The light of the torches showed it was of immense size, and, glancing around, no sign of the being they were pursuing could be found. In double file the party entered, and, in obedience to the colonel's order, formed into marching order to explore the cavern. No sooner had they done so, however, and the order to march been given, than a huge stone fell with a crash in the opening by which they had entered, completely blocking it. At the same moment a cold blast swept through the cavern, extinguishing all the torches. They were now in utter darkness.

"Keep cool, men," the colonel said. "We will soon be able to light them again. I have the material, and——"

His words were interrupted by a wild, screaming laugh that shook the ground and walls of the cavern. At the same moment a cold blast swept through the cavern, extinguishing all the torches. For a moment all was the same as before, but then a strange and terrible silence was re-established.

On a sort of dais at the further end of the cavern stood the Iron Spirit, holding a flaming torch in his hand. Half way between him and the spot where his men were stood a large barrel, and running to it from the spot on which he stood was something like a small black river. In an instant Colonel Morland comprehended the situation, and he made a step forward.

"It is gunpowder!" he cried, turning to his men. "Make a rush, and break the train before it can reach the barrel."

As he spoke, the Iron Spirit lowered the torch.

"Back!" he cried. "Advance another step one of you, and I will blow you all to eternal perdition!"

Still Colonel Morland continued to advance, and the Iron Spirit lowered the torch until it touched the stone floor of the cavern. A fizzle—a flash—a running streak of fire like the rapid motion of an angry serpent, and it had reached the barrel. Then a sound that shook the earth—utter darkness—oblivion!

CHAPTER XV.—A Foiled Rescue.

When, surprised by the approach of the troops, the Masked Captain had given the order to have Death-Trail Dick bound and left to his terrible fate, he had only waited long enough to see the command obeyed, and then had hurried up a path among the rocks with Rose Morland in his arms. At last, overcome by the excitement she had undergone, the girl fainted; when she again recovered consciousness she was still in the outlaw leader's arms, but the surroundings had changed.

They were now in a miniature canyon, the precipitous sides of which were covered with chaparral and stunted bushes; and hardly had her bewildered mind become aware of the fact when the outlaw halted before what seemed to be the entrance to a cave.

The Masked Captain entered the cavern, in the center of which more than a dozen men were seated around a fire on which some dried meat was broiling. They all arose to their feet and saluted him, but answering only by a short nod he crossed the cavern toward the opposite wall. As he drew nearer another opening could be seen, and passing through it the outlaw and his captive found themselves in another cave of about twenty feet square.

"Now," he said in a stern voice, "you are again in my power, and not all the powers of earth and heaven combined can rescue you. You had better make up your mind to stay here, for I have sworn to keep you here until you are dead. Take a good rest for a while, and I will return. When I return, I will expect to receive your answer."

At least a promise had been given her, and for that she was thankful. Her companions must have been killed or taken away. But the time passed, and all trace of rescue left her, and she awaited in silence the return of the Masked Captain. The day wore on, and she evidently expected him to arrive, and as the day passed by they began to murmur, because that he did not do so. Again a wild hope sprang up in the girl's mind that perhaps he might never return; but hardly had it gone so when it was cruelly dashed to the ground by an order from one of the sentinels.

"The captain!" he cried. "And cleaned out!"

Hardly had he uttered the words when the Masked Captain himself appeared; his clothes were torn and covered with blood and dust, while a cruel wound, bound around his forehead over his right eye, showed he had been wounded. In each hand he held a revolver, and he spoke in a thick, rapid voice.

"Save yourselves, men," he said. "The troops are after me. All the band is wiped out, and though I have managed to give them the slip for the present, in less than half an hour a squadron of cavalry will be here. They know the secrets of the retreat, and it is no use to make a stand. Our only chance is in flight, and there is not a moment to lose."

He paused as if out of breath, while the other ruffians looked at each other in consternation.

"The girl," the Masked Captain continued, after a moment, "is she safe?"

Before they had time to answer he had entered the smaller cavern and seized her in his arms.

"We are defeated, men," he said, "but not conquered. You take care of yourselves, and I will keep the girl. All of you meet me to-morrow night in the Devil's Canyon, and we will form another band that will avenge the brave fellows we have lost."

Even while he was speaking he had made his way to the mouth of the outer cave; after a momentary hesitation the rest of the ruffians followed, and they all stood together in the open air. Without another word the Masked Captain hurried on, while the rest conferred together, evidently in doubt about something. Bending down, the Masked Captain was about to whisper something to the girl, when the sound of approaching hoofs fell upon his ears. As he heard the sound a fierce oath left his lips.

"We are lost!" he was beginning, when around a turn in the canyon a body of nearly fifty horsemen came into view, a masked man at their head.

The masked man also evidently well realized the desperate nature of his situation, and placing the girl in the shelter of a huge boulder, with his own back against the rock, he leveled his two revolvers toward the advancing horsemen. Both weapons spoke simultaneously, and for a moment the masked man reeled in his saddle. Only for a moment, though, and then an answering volley of bullets came from the outlaws on either side of the solitary man at bay. Evidently one or more of them was fatal, and reeling for a moment he fell heavily to the ground.

The next moment the outlaws had dashed up to the spot, and, dismounting, the masked man tore the mask from the fallen man's face. As he did so a wild, agonized cry broke from Rose Morland's lips. It was echoed by a yell of rage from the outlaws, as they also recognized the face thus revealed. Though the hair, eyebrows, and mustache were singed all off, and strips of skin had peeled off, leaving the flesh bare, they all knew it; it was that of Death-Trail Dick!

CHAPTER XVI.—The Lady of the Cavern.

When on the night of the attack by the outlaws and Indians upon the emigrant train, Lily Morland had been seized by the Iron Spirit, she had been fast asleep. Awakening to find his iron arms encircling her, an involuntary, agonizing cry left her lips. Before she could repeat it, her emotions overpowered her, and she sank into

a swoon. Of the attack upon the train by the Indians and outlaws; of the parley of her abductor with her friends; of the charge through their ranks and all the incidents of that wild night's ride—of all these she was unconscious, and when she again began to revive, she was lying upon a bed, soft as eider-down.

Beside her bed a woman was sitting, and as she saw the girl move she arose to her feet and bent over her.

"Do you feel better now, dear?" she asked.

"Yes, thank you," the girl stammered, "but I do not understand. Has it all been but a fearful dream?"

The woman laid her hand upon the girl's forehead. The hand was a soft one, and the touch was caressing, bringing to the girl a feeling of sympathy, as only the touch of a true woman's hand can bring.

"No, child," she said, in the same soothing tone, "it has not been a dream. You have been very sick—sick almost to death, but you are better now, and will soon be well again."

"And Rose, and—my father?"

"You shall see them both again soon. But now try to go to sleep again."

"But you, madam? I know you are a friend by your voice, but I cannot recall when I have met you before, and why you should be so kind to me."

"Never mind, child," the woman answered. "You know I am a friend, and that is enough. Now try and sleep again."

"But I must know," Lily answered, petulantly. "If you will not tell me your name, at least let me see your face."

"As you will, child," the woman said, with a sigh. "I thought only one person should look upon my face again, but it is the hand of fate, and I cannot avoid it."

As she spoke, she removed her hand from the girl's face, advanced toward the hanging lamp and turned up the flame, shedding a mellow light through the apartment. Then, as she returned to the bedside, Lily saw she was not more than twenty at the most; her hair was golden, and fell in rippling waves to below her waist; her face was beautiful, too beautiful, almost, for it was as devoid of color as that of one who has already put on immortality.

"Oh, how beautiful you are!" Lily cried, at length. "You are too beautiful to live were you not as good as you are beautiful."

The other answered with a tender, chiding gesture.

"Do not speak of it," she said. Then she added, almost fiercely: "It has been my curse—my ruin—my perdition!"

The girl instinctively shuddered at the vehemence with which the words were spoken; noticing it, the other again laid her hand upon her arm.

"I forgot myself for the moment, child," she said. "Do not be afraid."

"Afraid, madam!" Lily cried. "That I could never be of you. But I know you must have suffered, and, though I do not wish to intrude upon your confidence, at least let me know your name."

"Child," the woman answered, sadly, "I have none. My name, like my past life, is dead. If, when you are once more happy among your

friends, you wish to remember me, do so as the Lady of the Cavern."

There was something in the speaker's voice, soft and gentle though it was, that forbade any further questioning on the subject, and for several moments there was silence.

"I did not mean to offend you," Lily said, timidly, at length, "but, madam, can you tell me how I came here? Who was it that rescued me from that horrible Iron Spirit?"

"You are mistaken, child, in your estimate of the Iron Spirit. He is one who has suffered much and remorse is always gnawing at his heart. He only carried you away that he might save your life——"

She ceased abruptly; a clanking footstep was heard beyond the tapestry; the next moment it was raised, and a visitor entered. A cry of surprise and terror left Lily's lips as she recognized him. It was the Iron Spirit. In his hand he held a flaming torch, and he advanced toward the woman standing beside the bed on which the girl lay.

"Take the girl," he commanded, in stern, rapid tones, "and seek the hidden cave. Too long have these people continued to molest me. Now they die."

"No, oh, no," the woman cried. "Do not destroy them. Give them one more warning, and then perhaps they will depart."

"No," he said, resolutely. "To show them any further mercy would be folly. Seek the hidden cave with the girl at once. Upon their own heads be the blood of these intruders. They shall die—the death of the sword!"

CHAPTER XVII.—Trapped.

As the troops stationed outside the entrance of the cavern heard the explosion within, they looked at each other in bewildered fear. Even the officer in command, a lieutenant fresh from West Point, was affected by the same feeling; but quickly recovering himself, he drew the revolver from his belt and sprang toward the opening in the rocks.

"Follow me," he commanded, and in an instant all the men had shaken off their first feeling of fear and obeyed the order. With their weapons in readiness, they entered the cavern, but no enemy confronted them except the sulphurous smoke that was almost suffocating.

In an incredibly short time, however, it cleared away, and then they saw the way of its escape was through an opening in the roof of the cavern. As the smoke escaped, and the atmosphere grew clearer, they saw their comrades lying around upon the ground in various attitudes, either dead or insensible. Following the officer's orders, they carried them out of the cavern into the open air, and in a few minutes the effect of the clearer atmosphere became visible. Colonel Morland was among the first to revive, and after him Lieutenant Alston.

In a few minutes more the whole of the party had recovered consciousness, and, though still bewildered, mechanically formed into rank and stood awaiting their commander's order.

"Men," Colonel Morland said, when the roll

the opening; then the other swung back the stone into its place and shot forward a heavy bolt that effectually prevented it being opened by anyone outside.

"Do not be afraid, child," the woman said, taking her hand, and thus they went along the passage for a hundred yards or more, when another seemingly solid wall confronted them. They passed through it in the same way they had done the former, and the bewildered girl found herself in a cavern whose extent seemed measureless. At first sight it looked as if it had never known human presence; but in a sort of niche in the wall was found a bed composed of bear skins and a lamp fastened by a bracket on the wall.

Telling her companion to seat herself on the bed the woman lighted the lamp; then wrapping one of the heavy fur robes around the girl's trembling form, she told her she must be brave, and wait here for a short time until she should return. The lady kissed her tenderly, and with a few more reassuring words, swung open the entrance stone and passed into the passage.

The time at which the Lady of the Cavern last said she would return, however, passed, and still she did not do so; then another quarter of an hour and another, and still she had not returned. A thousand thoughts of treachery and evil filled the girl's horror-stricken mind. Still she waited in a sort of dream, when suddenly a shuffling noise in the darkness of the outer cavern fell upon her ears. Her heart throbed as if it would break her, as she heard it, and realized that the enemy was approaching her lair.

Then came a low, warning growl, and a pair of fierce, fiery eyes glared at her from the darkness beyond. The next moment the form of a huge panther crawling stealthily along the ground, as if in readiness to spring, came into the circle of light around the spot where she sat.

It strikes the reader strangely that Death-Trail Dick should again appear in the flesh after having been tied to the stake by the Indians and set fire to. But the fact is that he was released at the last moment by the Iron Spirit, who, after he had reached consciousness, was captured in turn by the Madred Captain and strung up by the Indians. The Madred Captain had now forced Rose to appear with him before a villain who acted as mediator, but when asked if she would have the Madred Captain for a husband, she replied:

"Never! You can kill me if you will, but you cannot force me to utter the word!"

As the Indians and Indians rushed into the cavern, the surprised party was taken by surprise.

Colonel Mordred turned them from their confusion, and the outlaws and Indians received their Waterloo. Suddenly a voice was heard and the Iron Spirit was seen.

"I am here as a friend," he addressed Colonel Mordred. "Follow me."

"Where your help is that we need know that you are sincere."

For answer the Iron Spirit sprang back and drew his sword.

"I have offered you my friendship and you have refused it; now make me your prisoner if you can."

CHAPTER XIX.—An Opportune Arrival.

As Lily Morland saw the fiery eyes glaring at her and the panther crouching in readiness to spring, a feeling of the utmost horror took possession of her. Suddenly, however, from the cavern beyond a sound fell upon her ears, causing her to start. It was the sound of footsteps, and the next moment a man came into view. He was an old man dressed in the usual costume of a hunter; a repeating rifle lay in the hollow of his right arm, while in his hand he carried a torch.

"If that ain't my prodigal, it must be his twin brother," he said.

Alarmed by the speaker's approach, the panther had turned with a fierce growl; as he heard the old man's voice, however, he sprang toward him, and placed his forepaws upon his shoulders with unmistakable tokens of delight. The old man seemed no less delighted.

"Zephyr," he said, "I thought I'd lost yer, and the only true and original American hurricane was on the sweep no more. The firm of Tornado and Zephyr was busted."

Checking the panther's demonstrations of affection, he advanced toward the alcove; but Lily, overcome by a sudden revulsion of feeling, had fainted. He slung his rifle over his shoulder, and then, raising the girl's unconscious form with one arm, with the other hand he grasped the torch he had laid down and hurried in the direction he had come. In a few minutes he had crossed the cavern, and reached a small opening in the wall, so concealed by nature that only by accident could it ever be discovered.

Another moment, and they had passed into the open air. Casting away the torch and hurrying on for several hundred yards, the old man reached a small spring. Laying the still unconscious girl upon the ground, he lifted his face with cool water, and, in a short time, was bound to show signs of returning animation. A few moments more and she opened her eyes, and gazed around her in a bewildered way.

"Those horrid eyes," she said, with a shudder, "and that fearful Iron Spirit."

Old Tornado attempted to soothe her.

"Don't be afraid, little girl," he said. "The old hunting dog ain't no more of the breed, but I put lightly over such tender heifers as you. I'm old Tornado, I am, and me and Zephyr will stick to yer through thick and thin."

"Oh," Lily murmured, "but let me go to my father at once."

"We will try to travel on my horse, partner, until we reach the city of the plains," Old Tornado said. "It's just the thing I want, for I'm an old hunter and you ain't want no food, and if you can stand it I'll keep you as long as a red-tail grouse as ever was out."

The girl smiled at her perfect ability to do so, and for a couple of hours rode thus, and then, suddenly, Old Tornado stopped and placed his hand behind his ear in a listening attitude. For several moments he stood thus, then he said, rapidly:

"You sit down here and wait till I come back. Zephyr will take care of you."

Then grasping his rifle, Old Tornado walked rapidly away, and was lost to sight among the surrounding bushes. For several minutes he went on until he reached a sort of rocky ledge from which he could look down upon a canyon, nearly a hundred feet below. As he advanced and peered over the edge, an exclamation left his lips.

"I knew I heerd voices," he said. "Thar's a pile of infernal rascality going on down thar, and it's jest the time for the old whirlwind to sweep along."

Even as he spoke he raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

CHAPTER XX.—A Double Recognition.

As, leaping backward and drawing his huge sword, the Iron Spirit gave the challenge to attempt to take him prisoner, for a moment or two there was silence. At last Colonel Morland said:

"I only proposed that you should consent to be made a prisoner as a guarantee of good faith. I waive the condition, and only ask your word that you will not betray us."

"And I give the promise willingly," the Iron Spirit answered. "I am as eager as you can be to find your daughters and punish the miscreants who abducted them."

He sheathed his sword as he spoke, and then added:

"I would advise you to place a guard at the opening, in case of any of the villains returning before morning."

This suggestion was carried out at once, and Alston, in command of half a dozen men, was left to guard the opening, while the rest followed the Iron Spirit to the outer cavern. Arriving once more in the canyon, they found the Indians had made no attempt to recapture their horses, and preparations were at once made to follow the trail of the abductor of the colonel's youngest daughter.

The trailing party was under the guidance of Iron Horse, who soon proved his fitness for the position, and in a short time they had reached the spot where Old Tornado and the girl had dismounted a few hours before. The ashes of the fire were not yet cold, and, encouraged by this fact, they again pushed onward. For several hours longer they rode along, until suddenly from the distance rang out the sound of a rifle shot. It was followed by another, then another. Involuntarily all reined in their horses. Alston was the first to speak.

"It came from up yonder," he said, "and there seems to be a pathway."

He urged his horse onward as he finished speaking; his surmise had been correct, and a sort of natural pathway led up the wall of the canyon, which all following, in a few minutes a stretch of level land was reached. As they advanced a few hundred yards, a strange and startling tableau was presented.

In the foreground stood a group of ruffians clustered around a young girl who was making desperate but fruitless efforts to escape; in the rear

a man hung suspended by the arms to the limb of a tree. Even as they looked another report rang out, and the hanging man fell to the ground, the rope evidently severed by the bullet.

"It is the Masked Captain's hand," the Iron Spirit cried, "and the girl is one of those we are searching for. Charge upon them, and let not one of them escape."

As he spoke he drew his terrible sword from its sheath, and urged his horse to the front rank; then dashing into the midst of the ruffians, he stooped, and, seizing the girl in his arms, lifted her upon the saddle in front of him. The rest of the party followed his lead, and in a few minutes the fight was over. Those of the outlaws who were not killed were made prisoners, and among these was the Masked Captain himself.

Dismounting, Colonel Morland took the girl, who was none other than Rose, from the grasp of the Iron Spirit, and folded her in a fond embrace. As he did so the Iron Spirit also dismounted, and, advancing to where the outlaw captain stood, with a rapid motion plucked the mask from his face. The feature thus revealed were not unhandsome ones; but on the forehead, extending from the temples to the eyebrows, were two livid scars crossing each other. For a moment the Iron Spirit stood looking at him in silence; then a wild, wailing cry of agony left his lips, and he fell, face downward, unconscious upon the ground.

CHAPTER XXI.—An Ended Trail.

The sudden cry and the fall of the Iron Spirit instantly attracted the attention of all toward him. With a cry that seemed an echo of his own, the Lady of the Cavern sprang forward and raised his head upon her knee. Then, with rapid fingers, she unclasped the helmet, and removing it, let the pure air blow upon his brow.

A feeling of surprise filled the breasts of all present as they gazed upon the face thus revealed. Except for the crossed scars upon his forehead it was the exact image of the Masked Captain.

The latter also heard the general surprise, and as he gazed upon his living counterpart an ashen pallor blanched his face to the very lips.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "Is it possible? Harold—Marion!"

By this time Death-Trail Dick had also returned to consciousness, and he advanced toward the Lady of the Cavern.

"Has the dead come to life? Can it be possible that it is my sister Marion I see before me?"

The Lady of the Cavern extended her arms toward him, as if to fold him in a loving embrace.

"Yes, Richard," she answered, "it is I. Though you supposed me dead I was not so. But I could not let you know I lived after having brought shame and disgrace upon you all."

Death-Trail Dick's only answer was to clasp her to his breast.

"But our parents," she added, "they will never forgive me."

"Calm yourself, sister," the young man said. "They have already done so. The ruffian who blighted your young life was not satisfied until he had taken theirs."

A cry of the utmost anguish left the lady's lips.

"What would you say?" she wailed. "You do not, you cannot mean that they—that they are—"

Her sobs prevented her finishing the question, and her brother endeavored in vain to soothe her.

"Would to Heaven it were not so, Marion," he said, "but you must know the truth sooner or later, and it is no use postponing the time. They are dead."

"Dead!"

"Yes; but they died with words of blessing and forgiveness upon their lips."

"And that's a third card what'll take a hand in the game, ef 'no objections ain't raised," a voice said. "I'm the howling old storm-wind of the wilderness, and I've been trailing this hyar Iron Spirit for some time past. I calkerlated when I hit strike him we'd have a little whirl—'t all to our two selves, but since I've found out the sort of a critter he is, I take it all back, and subside."

Colonel Morland now sprang forward.

"Lily, my child," he exclaimed, "now that you are restored to me my happiness is complete."

Death-Trail Dick turned to the old man and extended his hand.

"Old Tornado," he said, "I am glad to see you. To you I also owe my life."

The old man seized the proffered hand.

"Right you are, pard," he said. "I'm Old Tornado, I am, the only true and original American hurricane. Here's Zephyr, too, and you kin see that he's gentle as a lamb what runs around after his mother."

He pointed to the panther standing beside him as he spoke.

"You have fulfilled your promise well," said Colonel Morland, addressing the Iron Spirit. "Now I hope you will not refuse my invitation to accompany us to Fort Mason."

Before the other could reply Death-Trail Dick spoke.

"But the gentlemen, Colonel? What do you intend to do with them?"

"I will take them with us to Fort Mason, where they will receive their sentence from a regular court of justice."

"Your decision is just," Death-Trail answered, "and I do not wish to dispute it, except so far as the captain is concerned. To Fort Mason he will never go, unless I am first dead!"

"What do you mean?" the colonel asked, at length.

"I mean," the young man answered, "that my long death trail is ended. The villain I have been tracking so long is hunted down at last, and I claim his life as mine!"

rich mine-owner in Colorado, and gradually he ingratiated himself into the affection of the whole family, myself not excepted. At last he avowed his love for my sister, and asked my parents' consent to their union. It was granted gladly, and the wedding day was fixed.

"During the intervening time he induced my father to draw his money from the bank in which it was invested and place it in a silver mine where it would be doubled in less than a year. My father consented, and, drawing his money, brought it home with him. That night Harold Kent and my sister eloped, and the following morning both my parents were found murdered in their bed, and the money gone.

"I was absent from home at the time, and, returning two days afterward, I found that an inquest had already been held, and a verdict of willful murder and robbery rendered against Harold Kent. The circumstantial evidence against him was overwhelming, but still I could not believe that the man I loved as a brother would act so treacherously. Not until I had gone over it, and gained added proofs that besides committing the murder he had inveigled my sister into a false marriage would I be convinced.

"Then I knew that he was both a murderer and a villain, and I swore by the most solemn oaths I would track him to the death. Like a sleuthhound I followed him West, and learned he had become the captain of a gang of prairie pirates, and now at last I have found him. Now you have heard my story, and I ask you if his life is not justly mine?"

As he finished speaking, for several moments there was silence.

"What would you do?" Colonel Morland asked. "Would you murder him?"

"No," the young man answered. "Miscreant though he is, I would give him a chance for his life. Post a squad of men to cover him with their rifles in case he attempts to escape. Then give us each a revolver with all the chambers loaded, and let us fire until one of us dies."

For several moments Colonel Morland did not answer; at last he said:

"If you wish it so much it shall be so," and turning he gave the necessary orders.

In a short time the preparations were completed; the ladies were conducted to an angle of the canyon where they could not witness the duel, and the two men stood twelve paces apart, each with a revolver in his hand. Six men, with rifles, on either side of him, made any attempt at escape on the part of the Masked Captain worse than hopeless; and all awaited in almost breathless silence until Old Tornado, who had been selected for the duty, should give the word to fire. He held his deadly repeating rifle in his hand, and suddenly raising it, he covered the Masked Captain's heart. Old Tornado then called out

"One—two—three!"

As the last word left his lips the two revolvers were raised, and both reports rang out simultaneously. All gazing eagerly toward the spot, Death-Trail Dick standing erect with his still smoking revolver in his hand, while, with a convulsive leap into the air, the outlaw captain fell face downward upon the ground.

CHAPTER XXII.—Retribution.

"My real name," Dick went on, "is Richard Kingston. When I was born my father was a wealthy merchant in one of the Eastern cities. About the time I was sixteen years old he became acquainted with a young man named Harold Kent. He represented himself as the son of a

CHAPTER XXIII.—Conclusion.

The next moment the Lady of the Cavern sprang from the place where she and the two sisters had been conducted, and advanced toward the spot where Death-Trail Dick stood.

"It was horrible!" she cried, with a shudder, as she buried her face upon her brother's breast; "but although I loved him so much once, I cannot deny his doom was just."

"Yes," the Iron Spirit answered, "his doom was just. When I of all men say it, the world must believe it to be true."

Tears that could not be restrained were trickling down his cheeks as he spoke; all looked at him in wondering silence until Colonel Morland spoke:

"Did you know him?" he asked.

"Yes," the Iron Spirit answered. "He was my brother."

"Your brother?"

"Yes. His name was Harold, and mine Arthur Kent. Even from childhood he was wayward and evil, yet I loved him, and when at the age of seventeen he ran away from home, it was the first great sorrow of my life. I waited day after day, until the days grew into months and years, to learn some tidings of him, but in vain; and then, when my parents died, I converted all my property into cash, and started to find where he had gone. For months I wandered from one part of the plains to another, until at last I struck upon this trail. He had left the prospecting party with which he had started, and gone to prospect upon his own hook.

Learning the spot where he had left them, I struck his trail, and for nearly a week I followed along it, until at last I came to the entrance of a cavern. Entering, I passed through it into another one, and still going on, I at last saw an opening ahead of me, and in a few moments more I stood upon a narrow ledge of rock overlooking a valley. At the same moment I saw a man climbing over the further end of the ledge, and notwithstanding the years that had passed, I at once recognized him as my brother.

I was about to speak, but before I had time to do so, he raised his revolver and fired. I saw the flash, heard the report, and then all went dark. When I again recovered consciousness, I was lying upon a bed of furs in the center of a cavern. Near me was a group of a dozen or more hunters seated around a fire, and lay my brother, bound hand and foot. The first thing I had received was a dangerous but not necessarily a fatal one, and I was able to listen to their explanation of how they had found my brother and me lying unconscious, and in feeble tones I told my story. At that moment all the love I had cherished for my brother burst out of my heart, and I was about to speak when the hunters pronounced me dead.

At that time I had conceived a plan to have traced to him, and then the thought of organizing the League of Gold occurred to me. I proposed it to the hunters, and the plan was carried into execution. Since then we have mined

the golden valley, until we each have accumulated an amount sufficient to make a dozen men wealthy for life. The entrance to the valley through which my brother entered it has been closed, and every precaution taken to keep out intruders. My assumption of a semi-supernatural character was for this purpose. Now you have heard my story, and from this hour I intend to commence a new life."

As he concluded, for several moments there was silence; it was broken by Death-Trail Dick.

"But my sister?" he asked. "How did you become acquainted with her?"

Before the Iron Spirit had time to reply, the Lady of the Cavern answered:

"He found me lying at the point of death upon the plains, where I had been left by the man who betrayed me, and he took and cared for me as tenderly as a woman could have done. To me he has always been courteous and noble."

"Then in gratitude for your service to both my sister and myself, I hope you will accept my hand," Death-Trail Dick answered, and again seizing the proffered hand, the Iron Spirit wrung it heartily.

When the body of the Masked Captain had been buried, a search of the outlaws' retreat was made. It was rewarded by the finding of a large amount of money and other valuables, and the following morning, the party, carrying their prisoners with them, set out to return to the cavern of the Iron Spirit.

Arriving there, he notified the members of the League of Gold that his connection with them was at an end, and by another sunrise the whole party had started for Fort Mason. In due time they arrived there, when the prisoners were tried and received the just reward of their many crimes.

During the journey Death-Trail Dick found opportunity to avow his love for Rose Morland, while Lieutenant Alston also declared a similar passion for her sister. That both avowals were favorably received was proved about a month after by the wedding festivities at the fort, when not only two but three couples were united, the third pair being Arthur Kent and the Lady of the Cavern, Death-Trail Dick's sister.

Almost immediately after the ceremony the latter pair started for one of the large Eastern cities, where they still reside. Years have passed since then, but he has nobly carried out his resolution made in the cavern leading to the golden valley. And the thousands of hearts made happy by the charity of Arthur Kent and his still beautiful wife have more than redeemed all that was evil in the once dreaded Iron Spirit.

Next week's issue will contain "THE SONS OF THE SWORD; or, THE WATCHERS FROM THE RHINE."

Should you like the stories being broadcast by WJZ from "Mystery Magazine," get a copy, and you can see the same stories in print.

PLUCK AND LUCK

CURRENT NEWS

21

HOW CHINESE TEST EGGS

Instead of using thermometers, Chinese incubator caretakers test the temperature of eggs by pressing the large end of the egg against their closed eyelids.

ANCIENT EYEGLASSES

Archaeologists excavating on the site of ancient Carthage have found, among other things, a pair of spectacles of the third century, B. C., and in a Punic tomb a terra cotta figurine of an organ, pots of rouge and face powder, bronze razors and milk bottles.

SUN AS POWER-SOURCE

In a recent paper on this subject Mr. C. Le Roy Meisinger records that in certain subtropical regions, where coal is scarce, such as Egypt, the Punjab, and the Karoo of South Africa, tank-wood boxes, blackened within, fitted with glass tops and properly insulated, have been found to register from 240 to 275 degrees Fahren., in the

middle of the day, and, with the addition of an auxiliary mirror, to reach over 300 degrees. These boxes are used as ovens for cooking, as well as for many other purposes.

IF "PIGS IS PIGS," DOGS IS DOGS

"A hungry genius who lives in Flushing, N. Y., gained renown by establishing the fact that 'pigs is pigs,'" said Magistrate James J. Conway in the Long Island City Police Court the other day, "and I am convinced that 'dogs is dogs.'"

John Perna, 60, Hunter avenue, Long Island City, had been summoned to court by a patrolman of the local squad on a charge of having five hunting dogs which not only were running about without muzzles but also were shortening the lives of the pet cats of the neighborhood.

"I only have one dog, that is the mother," said Perna. "The others are only puppies."

"As I said before, 'dogs is dogs,'" replied Magistrate Conway. "Unless you get rid of all of them by next Monday I will fine you \$10 for each dog, irrespective of its age."

Perna agreed to get rid of the dogs.

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SIX (6) DANDY SHORT STORIES

"CLUE: ONE HAIRPIN," by H. P. Rhodes

"A DEVILISH CONTRIVANCE," by Maurice Cress

"BETRAYED BY WORDS," by D. E. Kramer

"CHANCE," by Dorothy Shea

"ON THE TRAIL OF DOPE," by Leslie Barreaux

Besides all these it contains an interesting article by TOM FOX (Scotland Yard Detective), called "Booze Money," and a large collection of shorter items that will please you.

GET A COPY TODAY AND SEE HOW GOOD THIS MAGAZINE IS

THE BOY BEHIND THE BAR

— Or, —

The Terrible Stories He Told

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER VI.—(Continued).

"Yes," said Mrs. Oakley. "I thought he was fast asleep on the lounge, but he slipped out the back door and was gone for hours before I missed him. Then I went down there and found him, as you know. I don't know what will become of him."

"Well, I heard Mr. Hatchings say that as soon as his time was up, he would see him himself and try to get him well. Of course he will be perfectly sober then and in his right mind."

Then he went back, with Ellen and her mother and turned home to get supper. He told his mother all the events of the day and of the visit he had made to the Oakleys.

That night, about eleven o'clock, when there was a crowd of men in the saloon, the wife of a well-known citizen, who had been in the habit of spending his evenings there, drinking and playing dominoes, walked into the place just as her husband was taking a drink with two or three friends.

She called out in a tone that every one heard: "Give me gin and sugar, please."

Her husband recognized her voice, and with a frown as white as a sheet, went up to her and said:

"Lucy, what in heaven's name are you doing here?"

"Well, I came to be with you and have a good time. I want a drink of gin and sugar."

He put his arm around her waist and said in a hoarse voice:

"Come home. I pledge you my word of honor that from this time on I'll never leave you alone again."

"Then come home, Jack," and she walked out with him, leaving the glass of gin and sugar untouched on the bar.

It caused a sensation among those in the bar-room at the time, and of course the news spread all over town, but owing to the scandal of the people, it was not mentioned in the paper.

None of the friends of the family had anything to either of them about it, but it was known that he spent his evenings with her. It was reported to visit a friend, he was her escort. It was a rumor, and a great shock to her, and he never got over it.

The incident, however, had the effect of nearly quelling the rumors of the saloon, for scores of well-known citizens came in to talk the matter over and during the woman's absence had noticed some of the things that were going on.

From a place it became a dwelling place.

All pictures of the place would stop inside of the door, and you would see as if looking for some one, and then you would

"What is my wife doing?"

Or, worse, it would provide laughter.

A young man who was paying attention to a certain young lady poked his head in and made the inquiry if his wife was in there.

"No," replied a young man, "but your girl was in here a while ago with a rawhide looking for you."

That made the young man very angry, for everybody knew of his engagement to the young lady. He reacted it with an expletive.

The other young man was pretty well under the influence of his potations, and retorted in kind.

Before any one was aware of it the two drinkers were fighting like tigers. Tables were overturned and chairs smashed. Other men tried in vain to separate them. A coppler was broken and broke the cigar case, behind which Jack was standing, and to save himself he had to crouch under the counter.

Another chair was hurled and smashed a hundred-and-fifty-dollar plate glass mirror behind the bar.

The police ran in and arrested both of them. They were taken to the police station, and the next morning the entire community was scandalized.

The young lady who was engaged to one of the combatants, left the town to visit a relative in a distant city to escape the mortification of meeting her friends.

She did not let her lover know where she had gone, nor would her relatives tell him.

The young man was so upset about it that instead of being wise and keeping away from the saloon, he began drinking heavily.

Jack M. Canby frequently saw the young lover in the saloon in a state of morose intoxication, and realized that the poor fellow was trying to drown his grief in the flowing bowl.

From a jolly, lively, witty fellow, he became a nervous, quarrelsome man, who scarcely had a pleasant word for even his best friend. Some of his friends tried to cheer him, but in vain.

It was said that this girl was approached by a number of them to be reconciled with him to save him from a drunkard's grave, but if she ever wrote to him nobody knew it. The morning after the incident which brought about the separation he blew his brains out while sitting in the saloon directly opposite Jack M. Canby.

The bullet went clear through his head and hit a man in the back who was sitting some six or eight feet from him.

The second man, thinking he was shot, started to his feet and yelled murder.

The truth is the bullet that struck his back merely stung him, for its force was almost fully spent in passing through the subject's head.

It made Jack sick, and he told his employer so.

The employer, not wishing to get any more liquor that night, told him he could go home, and as soon as the body was removed, he looked up the place being too lame about of his usual time of drinking.

(To be continued.)

Radio Fans, tune in WJZ and hear the rousing "Mystery Magazine" stories they are broadcasting.

GOOD READING

LONGEST DAYS AT THE EQUATOR

There is practically no change in the length of the day at the equator throughout the year. While there is less than a minute's difference in length the day is slightly longer at the solstices than at the equinoxes. The interval from the rising to setting of the sun's upper limb at the equator is about 1½ hours 7 minutes.

INDIAN MAGIC LURES FISH

Joseph Hand has broken all handline fishing records on the New Jersey coast. While fishing in Cold Springs inlet, Hand, who is known in fishing circles as the Harbor Pine, can lift more than 1,000 pounds of weakfish for which he received \$200 in the local market.

Hand said recently that he had been offered a big sum by a syndicate to divulge what bait he uses to make the fish rise to his lines while other fishermen within a stone's throw of his boat get never a nibble. Hand said that he could not be tempted to sell his secret. It was told to him, he explained, by an old Indian chief who passed through Cape May some time ago with a medicine company.

CLOCK OF DEATH FULFILLS LEGEND

By the stopping of the famous astronomical clock of Henry VIII at Hampton Court Palace, and the death, within a few hours of one of the palace inmates, the ancient legend surrounding the "Clock of Death" has once more been fulfilled.

Tradition runs that the stopping of the clock portends the imminent death of a palace resident.

For the first time in many years the clock stopped recently, and that night an elderly woman, Miss Jane Cuppage, daughter of Gen. Sir Ralph Cuppage, who fought at Waterloo, was found dead in her apartments.

An official of the palace said that twice within his personal knowledge some one has died a few hours after the clock stopped.

The following morning the clock was started again and no cause for its stoppage could be discovered.

ASPIRIN FRESHENS FLOWERS

Can flowers may be prevented from fading by giving them an aspirin tablet. Norman D. Keeler, pharmacist at the State Sanitarium at Mount Airy, Pa., states that by this method he has not only preserved flowers several days beyond the time when they would ordinarily fade, but has revived them when wilted. The experiments were conducted with chrysanthemums. Some of them were put into water to which an aspirin tablet had been added; the others were put into plain water. Kept under conditions otherwise the same, the drugged blooms outlasted the others by three days. In another case, flowers which had stood in a hot room over-night and were badly wilted, were given fresh water to which an as-

pirin tablet had been added. They revived in two hours, looking as fresh as they did when picked the day before. The leaves, however, remained wilted. The aspirin acts as an antiseptic, interfering with the enzyme which causes the clogging of the stem at its cut surface.

PRETTY PEBBLES PROVE TO BE RICH JEWELS

Children playing on the beaches of the Arkansas River have for fifty years or more been searching through the sand for pretty pebbles. They were of various tints and some of them were prettily marked.

Recently some jewellers employed by a Topeka firm picked up a few of these stones and treated them the same way that they have been treating the precious stones which they have been receiving from Brazil, India, California and other places famed for their semi-precious stones.

The results were astounding and the "gems" from the Arkansas River were pronounced almost if not quite equal to the others more highly regarded.

The children searching for pretty pebbles did not know that what they found were in all probability the same as excited the curiosity of Coronado and which sent him in a northeast direction through Kansas in 1541 in quest of the fabled city of Cuivira, where he had been told that the kings of the country would not touch gold, because it was so common.

"Mystery Magazine"

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THE LOCK AND KEY

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

Out Today in No. 163

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In a test recently conducted by officials of a Scranton, Pa., coal mine, signals from WGY were received at the lowest level of the mine, 480 feet beneath the surface, and a half mile from the foot of the shaft. The experiment with radio in the mine was carried on chiefly to test the extent to which radio may be utilized for the preservation of miners' lives.

WARM-WEATHER RADIO

There is no reason why we should not enjoy radio during the summer, but it is useless to expect the same efficiency from our radio receiving set as during the cold, crisp winter weather. Warm weather is accompanied by thunder storms and atmospheric electricity in abundance, which are detrimental to radio communication. Nevertheless, these disturbances are not always such as to prevent good reception of nearby transmitting stations. It is a good plan during warm weather to reduce the size of the antenna. The author of these lines uses an antenna measuring 125 feet long during the fall, winter and spring, and an antenna measuring but 60 feet long and only 12 feet above the ground during the summer. With a long and high antenna, one is bound to pick up a good deal more static than with a short and low antenna. The latter will be found ample for the reception of nearby stations; and since the static will prevent the clear reception of long-distance stations, the radio enthusiast may just as well resign himself to his local programs. Nevertheless, there are some nights during the summer which are remarkably free of static and which permit of long-distance reception. The ideal arrangement, therefore, is to have two antennas, a short and a long antenna, with a switch for connecting either one with the receiver.

RAZOR BLADES

A most efficient and inexpensive condenser for use with vacuum tubes can be made out of a few discarded safety razor blades.

It is very difficult to determine the inductance of a vacuum tube, especially when used in a radio receiving set. While it is easy to obtain a rough regulation of the self-induction of a coil in a similar way, by means of a rheostat of some sort which varies the number of turns on the spool that come into play, it is difficult to make a condenser which can be regulated at will.

It is well known that a condenser is made of plates of a conducting material alternating with the plates of an insulating material. The capacity of a condenser is a function of the area of the plates, other as well as of the thickness of the insulating material. The razor blades, then, will form the conducting plates and the air will serve as a

insulator. To construct this instrument, mount between two plates a number of blades varying in length so that the capacity to be obtained may be varied. Mount the blades on a conducting axle riveted to the frame. A series of blades must be mounted on another axle in such a way that they will pass freely between those which are fixed. The dielectric shall be as thin as possible. The apparatus is complete when a corrugated

button is mounted on the end of the axle carrying the movable blades, so that these can be turned to vary the capacity of the condenser at will. A pointer fixed under the button and a graduated circle on the frame will make it easy to regulate once for all the position in which the blades are to be turned in accordance with the sending station which it is desired to hear.

SELECTING THE LOUD-SPEAKER

In a recent issue of *Wireless Age*, Dr. Alfred N. Goldsmith, Director of Research, Radio Corporation of America, tells of the principal faults of some loud-speakers and the general listening tests for them, as follows: 1. The loud-speaker fails to reproduce high-pitched notes, but does respond to low-pitched ones. Such loud-speakers will sound well on piano pieces in the lower register, and on bass voices. Tenors and sopranos will sound thin and weak, and the violin will lack piquant quality, being "flattened out" into flute quality. Speech, and particularly feminine speech, will not be fully intelligible. Orchestral selections will sound noisy and will have a drumming quality. 2. The loud-speaker fails to reproduce low-pitched notes, but does respond to high-pitched notes. Speech will be fairly intelligible on such loud-speakers, but the piano will sound thin and much like a harp or guitar. Bass voices will be weak or distorted like the baritone. The effect in the rendition of orchestral selections will be feeble and squeaky, and without "body" or roundness. The accompaniment of the 'cellos and violins, and other deep-voiced instruments, will be lost. The general effect will be that of a cheap and poorly designed portable phonograph with a small horn. 3. The loud-speaker may reproduce only notes in the middle register, dropping out high and low-pitched notes. This is unfortunately a fairly common fault. While speech is moderately intelligible on some examples of this kind of instruments, music is very unmercifully treated and the faults are a combination of those mentioned in 1 and 2 above. 4. Loud-speakers should not rattle on the loudest notes which are produced; but the user should be cautioned against overloading his vacuum tubes by excessively loud signals, combined with low plate voltage and incorrect grid bias. Unless the listener is sure the vacuum tubes are not themselves being "saturated" or overloaded, he should not blame the loud-speaker for rattling noises. 5. Loud-speakers occasionally are insensitive; that is, they fail to respond to weak signals at all, and do not give a good response to reasonably loud signals. The objection to insensitive loud-speakers is the necessity for overloading the tubes to get loud signals. 6. Some loud-speakers, while otherwise fairly satisfactory, reproduce combinations of instruments—voice and piano, or violin and piano—less satisfactory than solo efforts. This fault requires for proof of its existence a careful listening test on a suitable selection from a broadcasting station of repeatedly proven high quality.

Say, boys, do you know that some of the stories in "Mystery Magazine" are broadcast by WJZ?

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, AUGUST 20, 1924

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

TREE EXPLODES

A tree exploded near Ouachita City, La., severely burning W. C. McClure, who, with a gang had been cutting it down. A hissing sound issued from the tree as the saw ate into it. Believing that gas was escaping McClure applied a lighted match. Gas had crept into the tree from the ground, which is in the natural gas belt. The force of the blast knocked down two of the crew and the sound of the explosion was heard a mile away.

73 YEARS WITHOUT WATER

The case of a woman of Sussex, England, who has not drunk any water since the Great Exhibition of 1851, has come to the attention of a London physician. While attending her, she complained of thirst, and he suggested cold water. She then related that as a child she had visited the Great Exhibition and had a drink of water that had made her sick. Since then she had not had any water and had got along very well without it.

ELECTRIC CLOCK KEEPS FISH OUT OF CANAL

A General Electric engineer is the inventor of an application of electricity to save fish from death in the irrigation canals of the West. It is simply the use of electrodes immersed in the canal, with electricity flowing into them.

It has been found that the resistance to electricity is greater in water than in the body of a fish and that if a fish swims in the vicinity of two or more electrodes it receives a shock which causes it instinctively to dart away. These electrodes are placed to keep fish from getting into the irrigation canal, where they would die when the water is let out, the way in which millions of fish have given up their lives nearly in the past.

Mechanical devices heretofore tried have been mainly screens which were either too coarse to stop small fish or too fine to permit a free flow of water and refuse commonly carried in the canals.

ORCHARD IS ILLUMINATED

A spectacular fight is being waged against the Oriental moth, which is destroying peach trees in the big Weatherby orchard near Swedesboro, N. J., the fight being based on the principle of the attraction of the moth to the flame. Instead of candles, a battery of 150 incandescent electric lamps has been strung across the orchard.

At nights the lights are turned on, and the moths forget the peaches to flicker about the bulbs. There various ingenious traps to catch the pestiferous insects have been devised by the owner of the farm, who is eighty-two years old, but still the active manager of the place. He stays awake until dawn making a record of his moth-catch and studying their habits.

Other peach growers are watching his experiment with keen interest. Motorists who pass at night, seeing the orchard aglow with light, imagine the place to be a bootlegger's haunt.

LAUGHS

Bobbie—Oh, ma, I've got a sliver under my finger-nail! Ma—Serves you right! Haven't I told you not to scratch your head.

"Got any herrings roes?" asked a youth of the girl in charge of the fishmonger's stall. "My name ain't Rose—it's Gladys," retorted the damsel; "and please remember I'm Miss Smithson to you."

"Who is that fellow who just made that ringing defense of prohibition?" asked Smith. "Oh, he's a bootlegger who has become a millionaire since the dry laws were passed," replied Jenkins.

"Father, will you give me five cents for a poor man who is outside, crying?" Father—"Yes, son, here it is. You are a charitable boy. What is he crying about?" "He's crying 'Fresh roasted peanuts, five cents a bag!'"

"Don't keep calling me 'General.' I'm only a colonel." "'Scuse me, boss. I ain't disputin' yo' word, but any military gent'man dat gives his old nigger a dollar tip is jes' natcherly a 'gen'ral.'"

Blinks—Jones can't be a very patriotic American. Jinks—Never saw a more loyal Yankee in my life. Blinks—But he didn't stand while the band was playing "America." Jinks—Maybe not, but he always is the first one up at the ball park when the "lucky seventh" rolls around.

Returning from the dentist's, where he had gone to have a tooth pulled, Henry reported as follows: "The doctor told me 'fore he began that if I yelled it would cost me 75 cents, and if I was a good boy it would be only 50 cents." "Did you yell?" asked his mother. "How could I? You only gave me half a dollar."

If you have a radio, listen in on WJZ. They are broadcasting stories from "Mystery Magazine."

BRIEF BUT POINTED

BALL TEAM TRAVELS BY PLANE

For the first time in the history of aviation a United States Army baseball team and some "tooters" traveled by airplane recently from Mitchell Field to Camp Vail, and returned in the same manner. The excitement of the flight was too much for the local boys and they were on the short end of a 6-to-3 score. It had been planned to send the team by rail, but Major Hensley felt the heat might interfere with the boys on the fifty-mile trip and hit upon the plan to send them by airplane. Accordingly four De Havillands and one Martin bomber were put into service. Two trips of each plane were necessary to get the players to Camp Vail.

FIJI FISH CHASE BUGS UP TREES

Prof. C. C. Nutting of Iowa University has beaten "Big Bill" Thompson to it. Professor Nutting has returned from Fiji Islands with specimens of the tree-climbing fish. He is head of the department of zoology at the university. Thompson sailed in search of such a fish the other day.

Professor Nutting's climbers do all the tricks of the advertised Thompson fish and then some more. Every morning after breakfast they set out from their homes in the waters and go scampering about the beach looking for insects. When they spy a likely bug they chase him to a tree and then climb after him. Their fins have all the properties of hands and legs and they are equipped with little water pouches to sustain them on land.

SOVIET GIVES DIVORCE FOR \$1.50 IN 5 MINUTES

Soviet Russia offers far more advantages to persons seeking easy and quick divorces than perhaps any place in the world.

Under a new decree a divorce can be obtained within five minutes at a cost of \$1.50, provided both parties agree to the dissolution of the marriage. If, however, one party objects to dissolution the case must be referred to the courts, which will decide the question on its merits.

Miscellaneous reasons do not constitute a valid reason for the annulment of marital ties, but desertion, religious superstition, excessive religious piety, incompatibility of temperament and divergence in political views are held to be sufficient cause. No Russian may obtain a divorce and remarry more than three times within one year.

In consequence of the flexibility of the Soviet civil code covering domestic relations, divorces in the Moscow district increased by 45 per cent. during the first six months of 1924, as compared with 1923. In many cases the applicants for divorces were married only from three days to three months. In other cases couples divorced had been married from four to forty years. Religious superstition was one of the most frequent causes given in the applications.

The ease of divorce under the Bolshevik régime contrasts strikingly with the difficulties which beset those who sought separation during the Czarist days, when divorce was almost impossible because of the opposition of the Church

and the severity of the Imperial statutes. In those days it required from three to six years to have a marriage annulled.

KANSAS MAN HAS CONTRACT TO SELL SNAKES

Few persons in Hutchinson, Kan., would like to trade jobs with their neighbor, K. C. Beck. Mr. Beck deals in wild animals, and treats them much as a farmer treats the cows and the pigs and the chickens of his barnyard. Just now he is engaged in filling a contract for 3,000 live snakes for the French government.

He buys the reptiles in the locality from boys whom he instructs in the methods of capture. The boys look upon the traffic as a lucky thing for them. One youth of 14 years delivered eighteen snakes in a single day. The boy caught most of the snakes in water-meter manholes in the residence districts.

Beck ships the snakes by express to Brownsville, Texas, from which point they will be forwarded to France. One day recently, just as the business was getting under way, he sent out twenty head. After a time he expects that as many as 100 will be shipped each day. The containers are ordinary packing boxes, tight at all points except for a number of screen-covered holes to admit air. The reptiles require no food on the trip.

"I am not sure what the French Government wants with the snakes," said Beck, "but I suppose they will be let loose in agricultural districts, where insects and small rodents are particularly troublesome. They take all non-poisonous varieties, but none that are poisonous. This excludes rattlesnakes and water moccasins."

Last winter Mr. Beck shipped 20,000 live rabbits to the Pennsylvania State Game Commission. All sorts of creeping, flying and walking things are received and discharged at his "plant" daily. The same express deliveryman who took away the twenty snakes brought a miscellaneous collection of boxes containing the following contents: Two wild pigs, a male and a female; one woodchuck of black and orange coloring; and two fat fat lizards. These had started their journey in cardboard boxes. Of the lizards, Beck remarked, "I don't like to eat," but by and by he had them in their minds to agree with him.

At the Beck zoo just now are some baby kangaroos and baby foxes. The kangaroo parents came from Australia, the fox father from Kentucky and the mother from New Mexico. In the cage with the foxes is a Tasmanian devil. Looking more like a half-grown pig than any other familiar animal, it is almost, if not quite, the ugliest and snarliest piece of flesh on four legs. Beck says he would much rather go into any cage at the zoo, even the lions' cage, than the one where the devil is housed.

The detective stories in "Mystery Magazine" are dandies or WJZ would not broadcast them.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

WONDERS OF THE INSECT WORLD

The champion aeronaut is the king grasshopper, which has the ability to jump one hundred times its length, and can sail for a thousand miles before the wind. The cricket is a powerful singer, its shrill note sometimes being heard a mile away. The males alone are musical, and the females listen to their melodious wooings with ears which are on their forelegs. Being so musical, it would hardly be expected that they would be such fighters among themselves as they are, or cannibals, eating members of their own species when there is not enough other food at hand.

FISH GOING IN NORTH SEA

Fisheries experts recently have noted with anxiety that the great fishing grounds of the North Sea, which supply most of the sea food used on English tables, are becoming rapidly depleted through the energy of trawl fishermen who, since the end of the World War, have greatly increased in number.

The same condition, it is pointed out, existed in 1914, but the World War made fishing on a large scale virtually impossible, and as a consequence of the four closed years the runs increased greatly. In the last year or so fishermen have been forced to go further and further afield, and it is even suggested that the opening of the great fishing grounds off the Falkland Islands might be advisable. This would mean establishment of a special service of refrigerating steamers to bring the catch to British ports.

FIERY BREATH MEANS FIRING FOR FORD MEN

Henry Ford has decided to discharge any employee whose breath may smell of liquor, and even those whose breaths do not smell but who have liquor in their homes.

An order to this effect has been posted in the Ford factory and a copy was brought to prohibition headquarters in New York recently by Izzy Einstein who has been in Detroit making raids. The order reads:

"From this date on dismissal without opportunity for appeal will be the penalty imposed on any man found to have the odor of beer, wine or other liquor on his breath or to have intoxicants on his person or in his home.

"The Eighteenth Amendment is a part of the fundamental law of this country. It was meant to be enforced and so far as our organization is concerned it is going to be enforced to the letter."

SOAP MANUFACTURED BY ANCIENT GAULS

Made from goat's tallow and beechwood ashes, the earliest forms of soap were used by the ancient Gauls of Germany to give a red color to the hair, according to the records of the historian, Pliny the elder. Although mixed with lard and lye, it was not known as a cleansing substance, but was often employed in treatment of skin troubles. The Gauls, it is said, introduced it into the other parts of the world. To-day the yearly production in this country is estimated to be 2,500,000,000 pounds. Not until about the second century of the Christian era was the product used as a cleansing article, it is claimed, and an ancient factory for manufacturing the material unearthed in the ruins of Pompeii still contained a quantity of it in a good state of preservation. Northern Spain and Marseilles later became the chief centres of the industry and produced large amounts of the Castile variety from olive and lye. Earlier accounts of the existence of soap among Asiatic peoples are believed to refer to some kinds of mixtures which were devoted to purposes entirely apart from those of lyes or cleaning substances.

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LOOK, BOYS!

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MILLIONS IN GOLD — WHAT BECOMES OF IT

What becomes of gold? It has many channels of disappearance, according to experts. Figures show that more than half of the annual output is employed in the fine arts and jewelry trade. Thousands of pounds also are used by dentists, according to *Popular Mechanics*, one estimate being that over a ton is needed every year for the filling of teeth. Then money is worn away in handling, this loss being placed at \$1,250,000 annually. Bank of England sovereigns are often tested and found to have lost much of the original weight. Of the immense quantities of the precious metal that have been buried away in the earth, it is believed comparatively little has ever been recovered. The priests of Peru are said to have buried approximately \$10,000,000 worth of treasure to preserve it from the clutches of their persecutors. None of this has been found. The tombs of the Kings of Egypt were found to contain millions of pounds of gold and silver. In the case of Alexander the Great became the master of great hoards of gold.

Abolish Trusses Seal Hernia!



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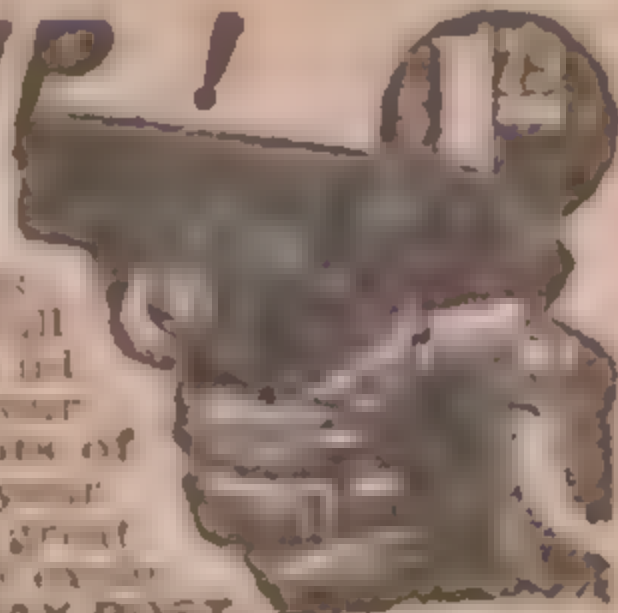
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Here's the Secret

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I thought it was hopeless until there came to me the simple but truly wonderful discovery which has brought such great relief and joy to me and to other women that it really cannot be expressed in words.

My face is now not only perfectly free from superfluous hair but smooth and soft as a baby's, all by use of the simple method which I will gladly explain to any woman who will send her name and address.

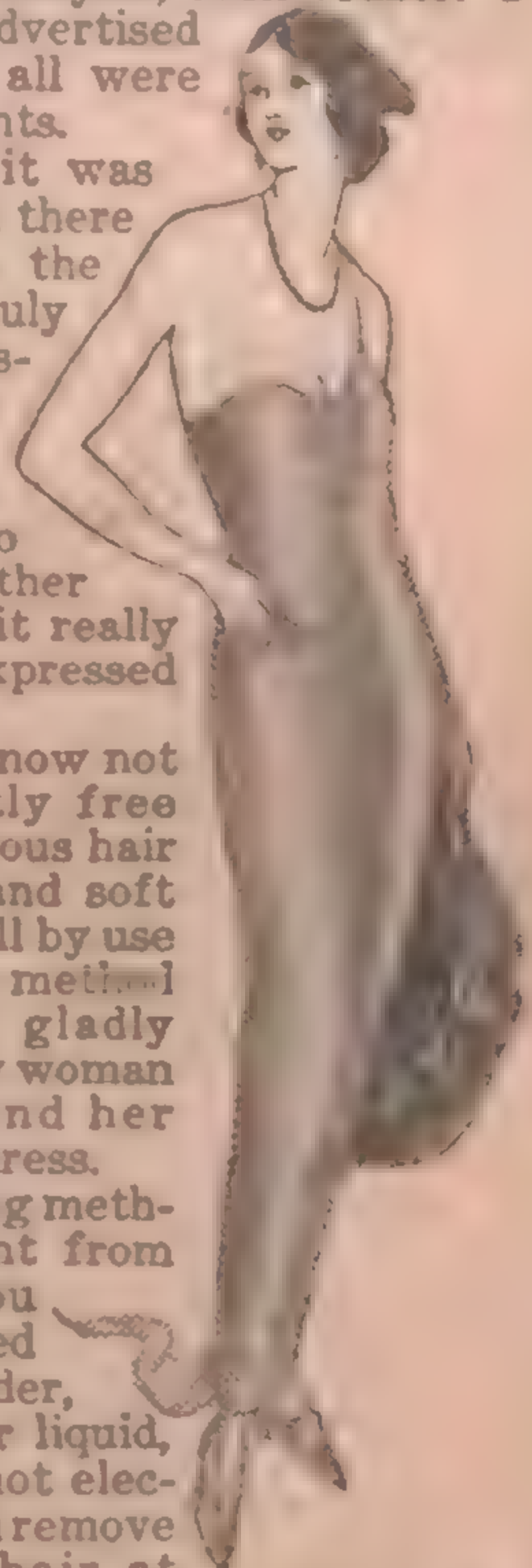
This amazing method is different from anything you have ever used—not a powder, paste, wax or liquid, not a razor, not electricity. It will remove superfluous hair at once and will make the skin soft, smooth and beautifully attractive. Its use means an adorable appearance. And you face the brightest light—the most brilliant electric lamps—even the glare of sunlight joyously.

With this method, used according to the simple directions I will give you, your trouble with superfluous hair is over permanently. You will never again appear with that ugly growth to disfigure your face.

So overjoyed was I with the results this discovery brought to me that I gave it my own name—**Lanzette**.

Send for Free Book

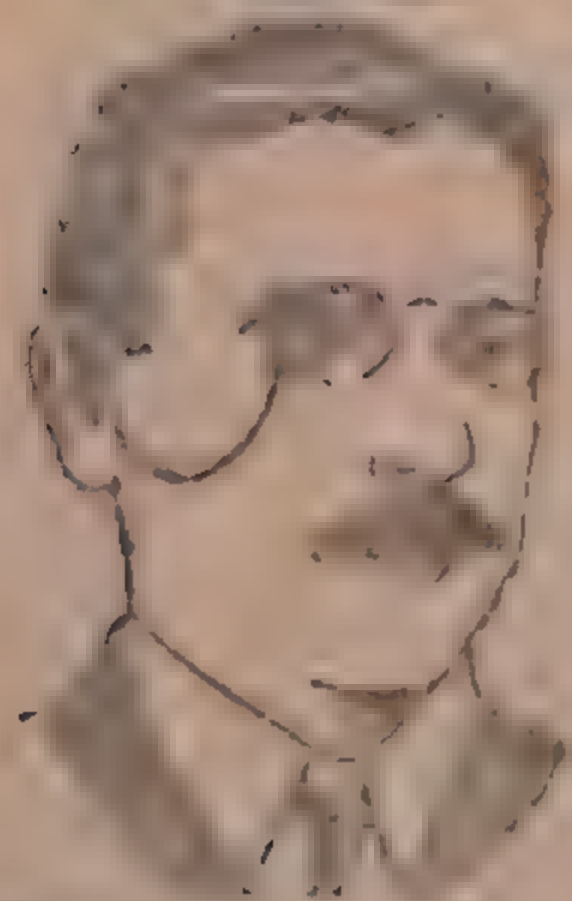
A book that tells just how this wonderful method gets rid of superfluous hair is free upon request. It is a book that is a must for every woman. Address **Lanzette Institute**, 1105 Case Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind. or 1105 Case Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind. or 1105 Case Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind.



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"The Best Hunch I Ever Had!"

"It happened just three years ago. I was feeling pretty blue. Pay day had come around again and the raise I'd hoped for wasn't there. It began to look as though I was to spend my life checking orders at a small salary.

"I picked up a magazine to read. It fell open at a familiar advertisement, and a coupon stared me in the face. Month after month for years I'd been seeing that coupon, but never until that moment had I thought of it as meaning anything to me. But this time I read the advertisement twice—yes, every word!

"Two million men, it said, had made that coupon the first stepping stone toward success. In every line of business, men were getting splendid salaries because they had torn out that coupon. Mechanics had become foremen and superintendents—carpenters had become architects and contractors—clerks like me had become sales, advertising and business managers because they had used that coupon.

"Suppose that I . . . ? What if by studying at home nights I really could learn to do something besides check orders? I had a hunch to find out—and then and there I tore out that coupon, marked it, and mailed it.

"That was the turn in the road for me. The Schools at Scranton suggested just the course of training I needed and they worked with me every hour I had to spare.

"In six months I was in charge of my division. In a year my salary had been doubled. And I've been advancing ever since. Today I was appointed

manager of our Western office at \$5,000 a year. Tearing out that coupon three years ago was the best hunch I ever had."

For thirty-two years, the International Correspondence Schools have been helping men to win promotion, to earn more money, to have happy, prosperous homes, to get ahead in business and in life.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy (including C.P.A.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nicholson Cost Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
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